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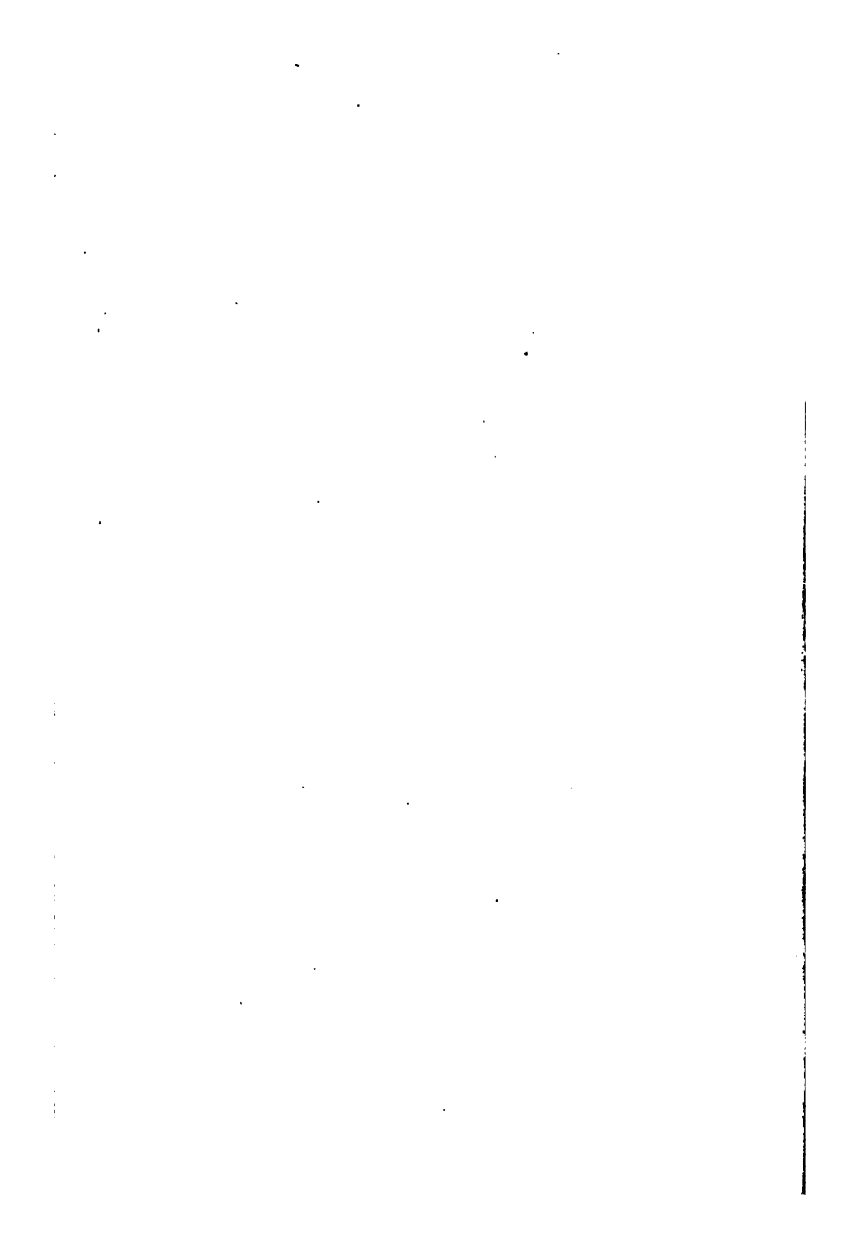
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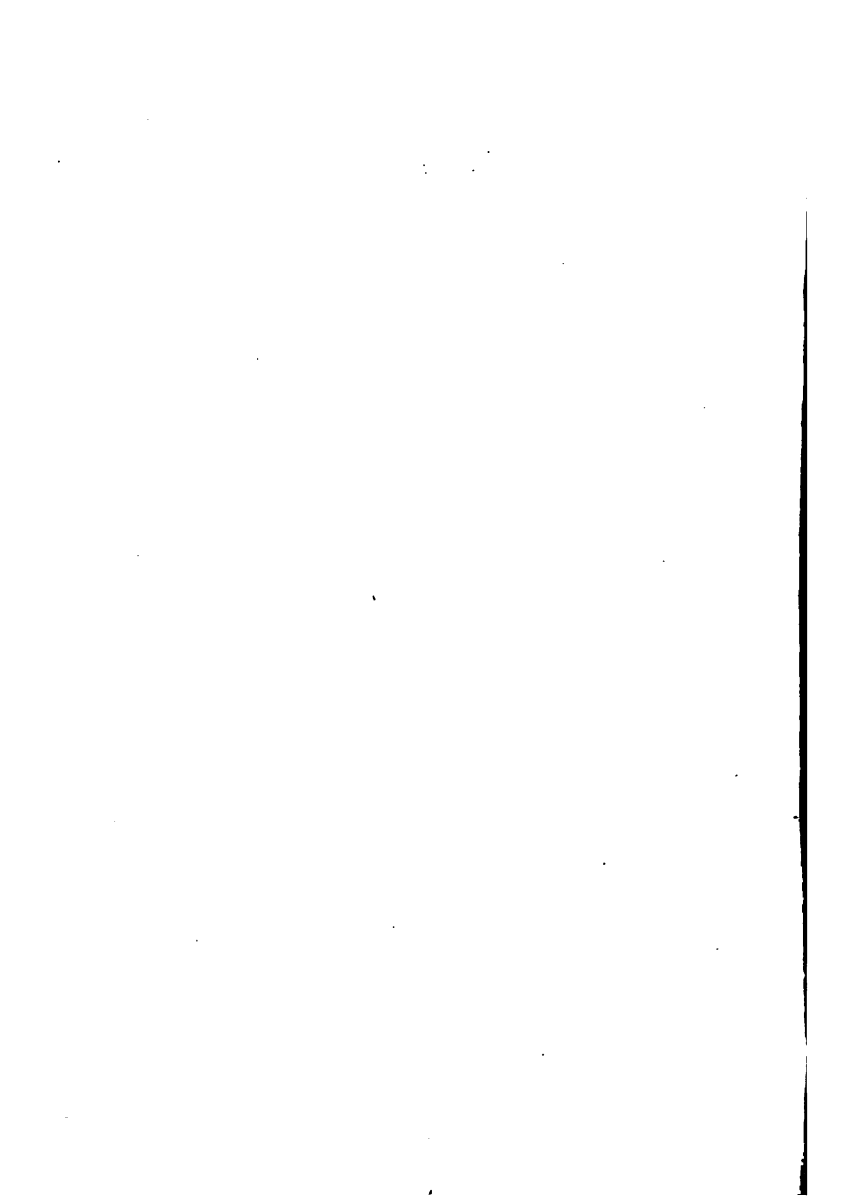


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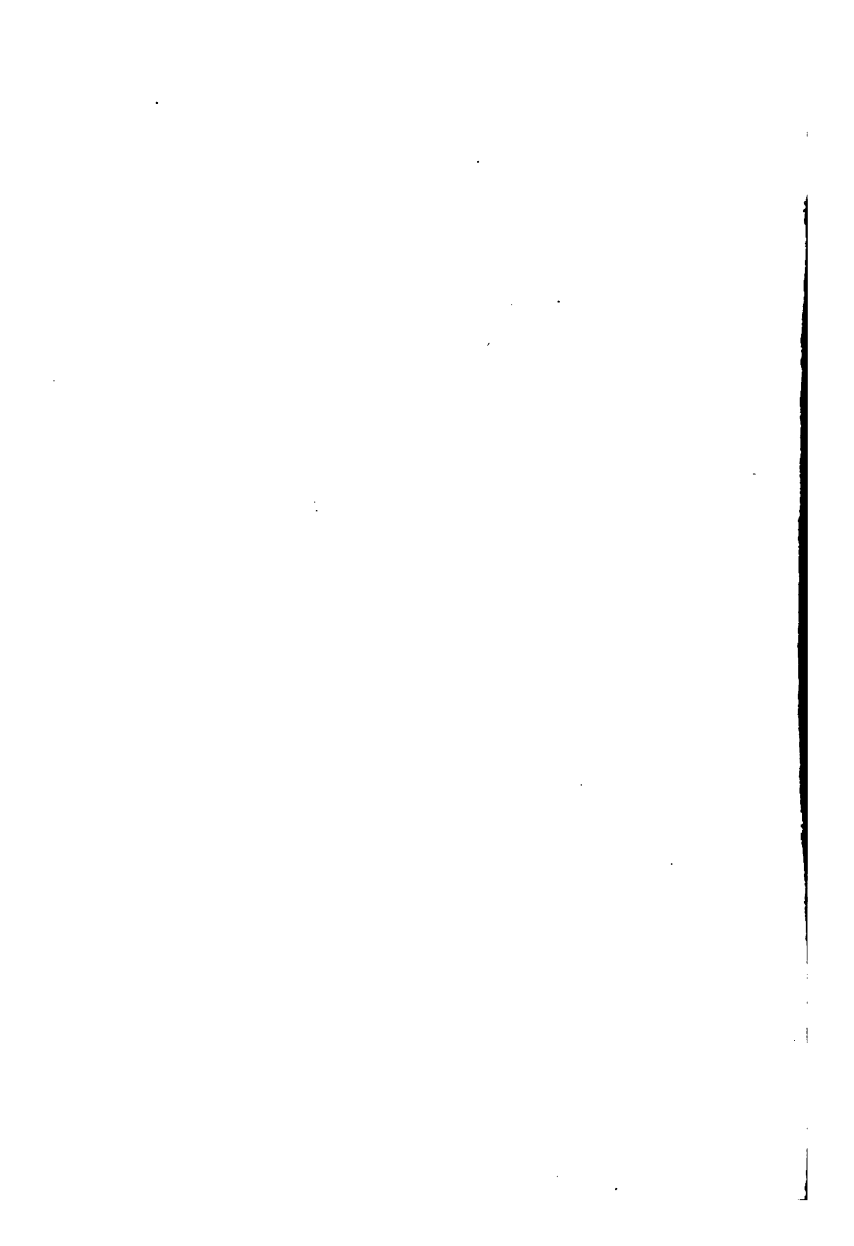
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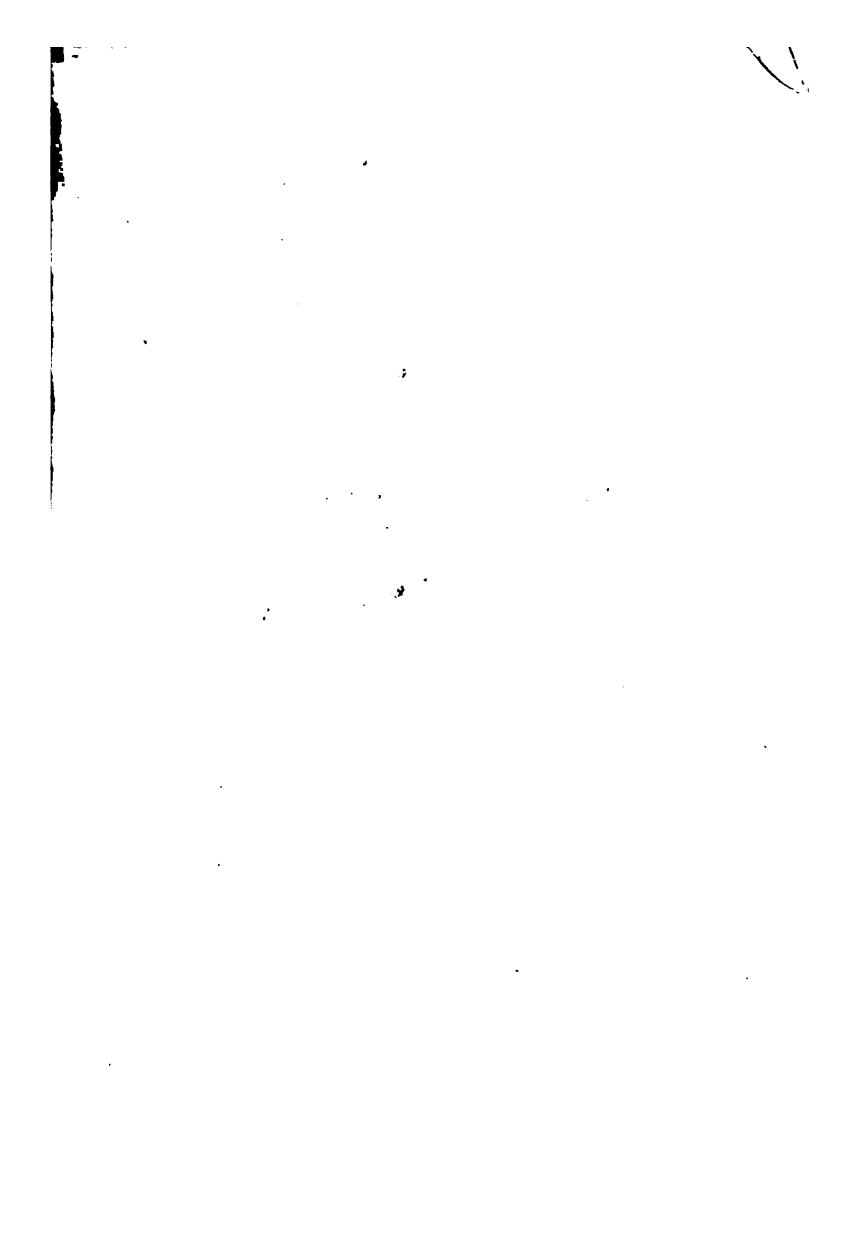


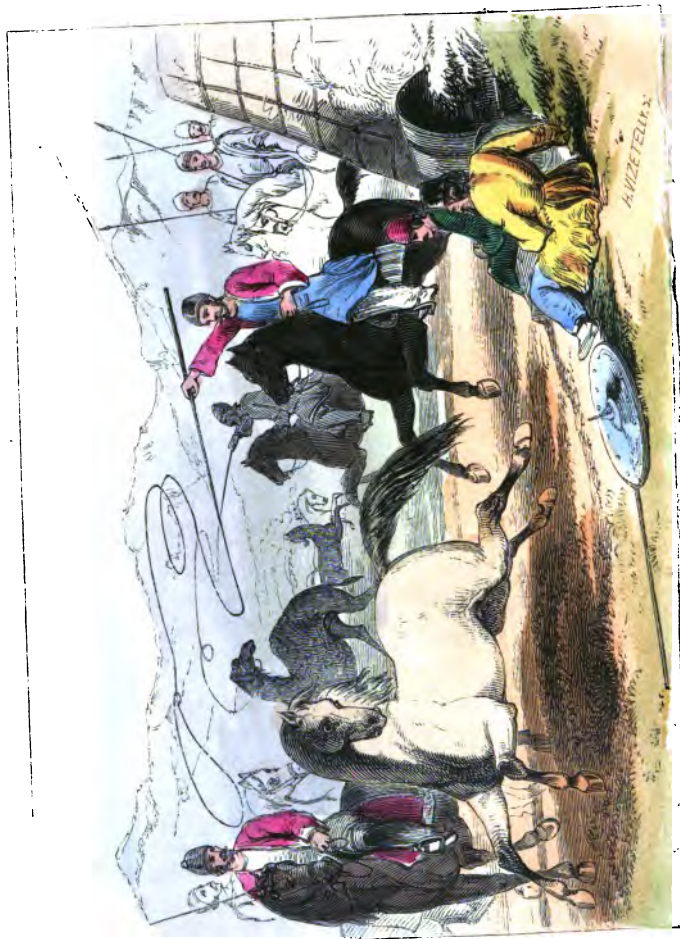


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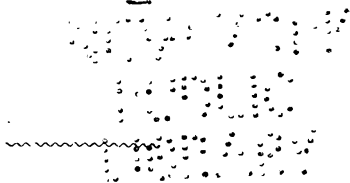


HERDSMEN
AND
TILLERS OF THE GROUND;

OR,

Illustrations of Early Civilisation.

BY MRS. PERCY SINNETT.



NEW YORK:
WILEY & PUTNAM, 161 BROADWAY.

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P R E F A C E .

THE present little volume is intended, with one which preceded it, to form part of a descriptive history of the Progress of Civilisation, as far as it can be made interesting to Juvenile Readers, in a series of sketches of the life of races existing at present in various stages of advancement.

In choosing a subject of this kind, I fear I am, in some measure, running counter to the fashion of the day, which, in direct opposition to the "useful knowledge" system of some years ago, seems inclined to receive with favor only what is, or claims to be, "imaginative," and to reject all dealings with "matter of fact." It is, however, precisely because a cultivation of the imagination—of a sense of the beautiful and poetical, is of the highest value, that I regret the adoption of what I believe to be the surest method of extinguishing it. If we look into the history of those

in whom the imaginative faculty has obtained its fullest and most brilliant development, we shall oftenest find that the contrary course has been pursued. The plainest and simplest aliment is likely to produce the soundest mental health; and as poetry, the brightest flower of the human intellect, springs mostly from the most vigorous soil, the most thorough mental cultivation is probably the surest way to the attainment of the appreciation of poetical excellence.

INTRODUCTION.

THE condition of those whom we call savages, the lowest and rudest condition of human society, in which men live like the wild animals by which they are surrounded, merely on the precarious products of the chase, or what the earth untilled brings forth, is one evidently not intended to be lasting; but merely, like the period of infancy, to be a passage towards another and better.* For this progress, however, some communication with people in a superior state seems to be necessary, just as a child, for the development of his faculties, needs the instruction of those older and better informed. Even the lower animals evidently teach their young; and we know of no instance in which nations have advanced quite unassisted to a higher stage of civilisation. The first inhabitants of the earth, we are told, enjoyed the advantage of direct communication with beings of a higher

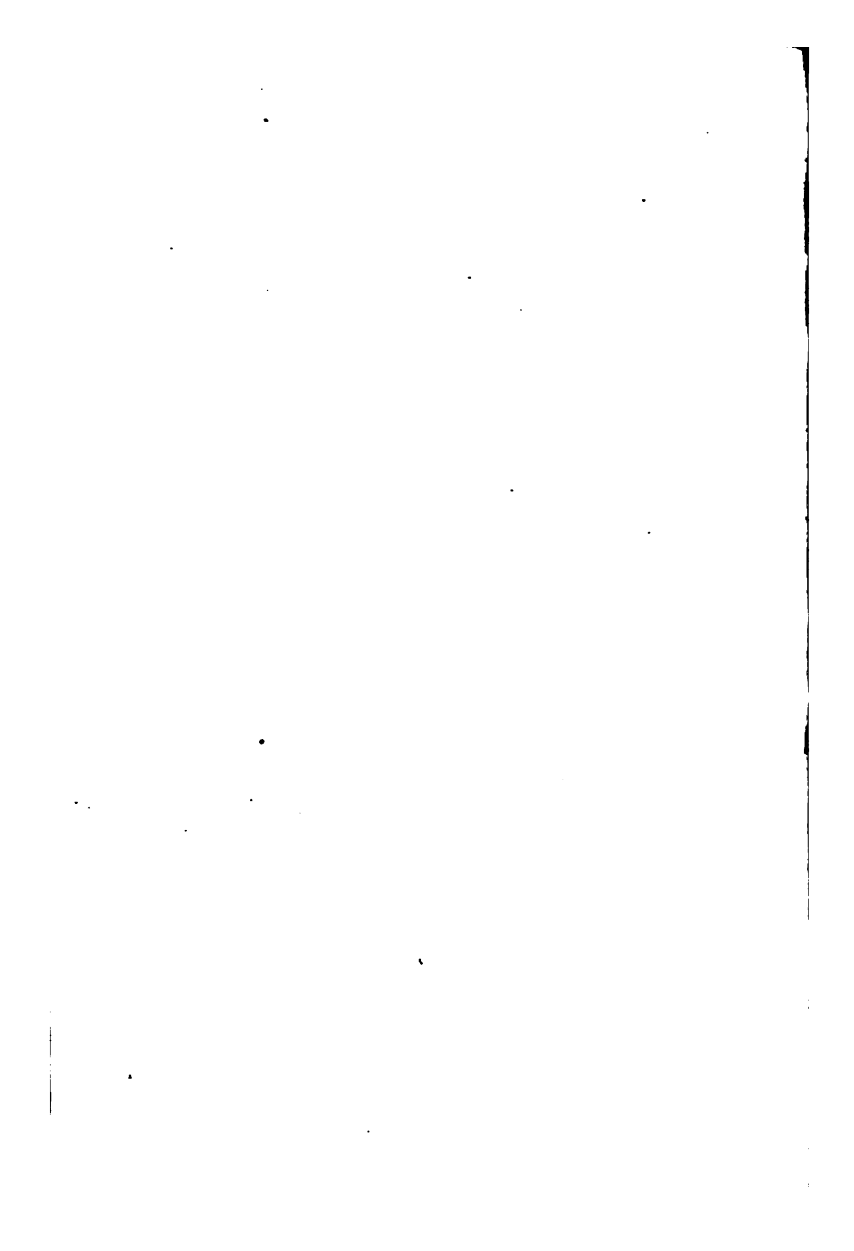
* Illustrations of the life of some of the nations still in this stage have been given in a little volume, entitled, "Hunters and Fishers, or, Sketches of Primitive Races in the Lands beyond the Sea."

order ; but that is no longer necessary now, when nations exist capable of leading forward the younger branches of the human family.

It is a great step towards improvement, when men discover, that instead of killing and devouring immediately every animal they meet with, they can secure a far more plentiful and certain subsistence, by keeping flocks and herds ; that it is better to protect and cherish, than to injure other creatures. This state, which is called the pastoral life, is generally found to be the easiest transition from that of the savage, and it is not till a still further advance has been made that men begin to cultivate the ground. When Julius Cæsar first came to England, he found that the more civilized inhabitants of the southern parts of the country had abundance of corn-fields, and subsisted in a great measure by agriculture ; whilst the people of the midland and northern countries, who were in a much wilder state, lived only on their flocks and herds. With most of the nations of Europe, and the natives of temperate climates, this has been found to be the case ; but in many tropical countries the soil is of such abounding and exuberant fertility, that the slightest cultivation is sufficient to raise from it a plentiful supply of food—and this is, therefore, the readiest means for them to resort to, when, as the numbers of the people increase, the wild animals and spontaneous productions of the earth are no longer sufficient for their wants. The situation and character of some countries lead their inhabitants, in the first instance, to trade and barter. The bread-fruit and cocoa-nut tree to the islander of the Pacific—walrus teeth

and furs to the natives of the Frigid zones, afford the means of barter with other nations for hatchets, nails, or whatever else they may require ; so that they become traders even before they have emerged from savage life.

Where, as in Central Asia, there are great grassy plains which afford abundant pasturage for cattle, and are extensive enough to allow of removal whenever it becomes scarce, the pastoral life is mostly continued for a very long period ; and this, though at first appearing as an advantage, has really been an obstacle to the improvement of the people who inhabit them, by affording a temptation to perpetuate a wandering mode of life. The industrious cultivation of the ground first really puts an end to barbarism. When a man has made himself master of a little spot on which he has bestowed care and toil—has built himself a fixed habitation, surrounded by fields and plantations—grounds to which he becomes attached by his remembrance of the past, and his hopes for the future—he soon begins to perceive the benefits of peace and order and mutual helpfulness, as well as of law and government, as a means of obtaining justice ; and thus is laid the foundation of what is properly called society, and the way opened to an improvement of which we can see no end.



THE NOMADIC HERDSMEN OF SIBERIA.

OF all races of men who have passed the stage of merely savage life, the pastoral tribes of Siberia are, perhaps, in the poorest condition ; and when we consider the character of their country, and the terrible severity of their climate, we shall, perhaps, rather feel surprise that they continue to exist at all, than that they have not made greater progress. In some cases, indeed, their difficulties appear to have been insurmountable,—for some tribes have died away altogether, and others have sunk back from the condition of the herdsman, to that of the hunter and fisher ; but this decline has mostly been owing more to the ill-judged measures of the Russian government than to natural obstacles. These are, however, great enough. In the dreary plains over which they wander, winter, the sternest and most rigorous, reigns during nine months of the year. In January, the intensity of the cold makes it difficult to breathe ; and even the wild rein-

deer, the denizen of these polar regions, withdraws from the open plains, southward to the deepest recesses of the forests of birch and pine, and stands there torpid and motionless, as if deprived of life. The air is so sharp, as to occasion a most painful sensation in the throat and lungs; the breath in the nostrils of horses forms icicles, so that, if not relieved, they would be in danger of suffocation; and the evaporations from their bodies are instantly converted into millions of needles of ice, that fill the air around them with a crackling noise. The frost bursts asunder the thick trunks of trees, with a report as loud as that of a cannon; splits the soil into yawning chasms, through which water sometimes rushes up from great depths of the earth, to be instantly converted into ice; rends away masses of rock from the cliffs of the arctic shore; and extends its influence even beyond the earth, for the deep blue polar sky, with its hosts of resplendent stars, becomes shrouded in mist, through which their light is scarcely seen.

Yet this terrible season is chiefly regarded as the most favorable time for travelling, for the surface of the ground is then hard; while in summer there is often just warmth enough to convert it into an almost impassable swamp, by thawing it so far, that the horse's hoofs sink through upon the perpetually frozen soil beneath. What is called the summer seems, indeed, often the drearier season of the two; for over a

great part of Northern Siberia the vegetation of the finest months of the year produces nothing more than a pale moss, which serves as food for reindeer. Further south, a few stunted plants make a faint struggle for existence, willow bushes put forth little wrinkled leaves, the banks which slope towards the south assume a greenish tinge, and in June a few berry-bearing plants blossom; though even then an icy blast from the Arctic Sea will often destroy these blossoms in an hour.

In July the air is clearest, and the temperature becomes milder; but now comes a fresh plague, in the shape of millions of musquitoes, which darken the air, and oblige every one to take refuge in the thick and pungent smoke of fires made of moss and damp wood. Even at this season, also, violent tempests and snow storms are of frequent occurrence on these unsheltered wastes; and the traveller who thinks himself fortunate to find a refuge from them in some one of a few ill-built wooden sheds, which have been erected by the Russians at great distances from each other, often runs no little risk of suffocation from the smoke of his fire being driven in upon him from every side by the furious gusts of wind.

The desolation of this icy wilderness is, however, in summer, relieved by the abundance of animal life. Not only wolves, bears, and arctic foxes, but sables, squirrels, and wild reindeer, in countless thousands,

quit the shelter of the woods, and come down to the open moors ; eagles, owls, and mews, pursue their prey along the sea-shore ; myriads of water-fowl are busied in building their nests ; the ground is alive with snipes and snow fowl ; and the nomadic herdsmen come down with their reindeer to the sea-shore.

In a country so extensive as Siberia, the scenery is of course not all of the same character. The southern districts abound in thick forests of birch, willow, juniper, maple, larch, and other large trees ; and numerous little lakes, of the most regular oval forms, lying sheltered among their high wooded banks, the mirror-like stillness of their sheltered waters, broken only by the occasional splash of the startled wild-fowl, have a very pretty effect. In these districts, also, are found several kinds of fruit,—raspberries, blackberries, bilberries, currants, a species of cherry, and the nut of the Siberian cedar, which is much valued ; and the short but powerful summer covers the ground with flowers and aromatic plants.

The principal pastoral tribes of Siberia are the Yakuts, Yukagirs, and Tungusians, whose only wealth consists in the number of their reindeer, horses, and horned cattle. Of these the reindeer is the best adapted to the climate, requiring no shelter, finding its own food, and affording not only milk and meat, but, in its skin, bones, horns, and sinews, excellent materials for tents, clothing, and many kinds of utensils ; standing

therefore in the same relation with respect to utility to the Siberian herdsman, that the buffalo does to the Indian of the North American Prairies, but with the great difference in favor of the former, that he has his herds of tame reindeer always at hand, while the Indian is dependent for the buffalo on the perils and uncertainties of the chase. Oxen give much trouble to their owners, as they have in this country to be fed on winter provisions for many months, and this cannot be collected in sufficient quantities without many long and toilsome journeys.

The dwellings of the wandering inhabitants of these desolate regions are of two kinds. In summer they are light, circular tents, or yurts, as they are called; formed of poles, and covered with birch bark, which they strip in large sheets from the trees, and after softening them by boiling, sew them together. The outside being white and the inside yellow, these yurts have a very pretty appearance, looking, at a little distance, like tents of white canvas. The Yakuts sew the sheets of bark together, with thin cord made of horse-hair, and sometimes ornament them by embroidering them along the seams. The Tungusians have also summer tents, covered with cloth or matting; and those whose possessions are numerous, build little huts in the forests, where they leave behind such articles as are required only in the winter.

During the summer, these tribes roam incessantly

about in search of the finest pastures ; and, while their cattle are feeding, occupy themselves in collecting the requisite store of winter forage : but as the severe season approaches they return to the borders of the rivers and lakes, where they generally erect the more solid habitations, which are to afford them shelter during the winter, and which are often stout enough to last several years, being only abandoned in the summer. These are huts built of thin boards in a pyramidal shape, and covered thickly on the outside with branches, grass, and mud. The snow is piled up high around them, to protect them from the piercing winds ; and two apertures are left for windows, which are covered with fish-skin, or thin plates of ice, and admit a scanty light. The floor is of beaten mud, and round the walls are banks which serve for sitting on during the day, and sleeping on at night. Outside is a shed for the cows, when there are any, although, in very cold weather, they are sometimes brought in to enjoy with the rest of the family the warmth of the fire, which is kept constantly burning ; but the horses are left to shift as well as they can for themselves. The insides of these yurts are usually so extremely filthy, that the presence of the cows is not likely to add much to their uncleanness.

In the mode of preparing their food, the wanderers of the northern woods and plains contrive often to make the keen frosty air almost as serviceable as fire. They cut in the autumn, long, thin slices of beef, and

hang them on a sort of wooden scaffold, prepared for the purpose, where they are completely exposed to the action of the sun and the frost, and are not considered ready for use till the following spring. By this time, it is scarcely possible to guess of what substance they consist,—the fat having assumed the appearance of snow-white wax, and the lean looking, when cut, smooth, hard, and shining, like glue, and tasting, it is said, quite as if it had been cooked. Fish is also frozen for winter use in pits prepared for the purpose, and, as among the Laplanders, a great deal is smoked. Whatever is eaten fresh, is usually prepared in the same primitive manner as in the Brazilian forests, and elsewhere, by being stuck on thin splinters of wood before a fire ; but among all northern nations, the most common mode of cooking is that of boiling in a stone or iron kettle. The flesh of the reindeer, with the addition sometimes of a little salt, or a few roots, makes the principal food of these people, although it is sometimes varied by the introduction of some peculiar dainties which we would rather not describe. Some are in themselves disgusting, and some are made so by the manner of their preparation. Fortunately for travellers, who may be compelled to partake of the hospitality of a Yakutian hut, milk, either fresh, or prepared in various ways, forms a very important article in their housekeeping. The simplest plan of preparation, is that of pouring it into an open vessel, and

leaving it to freeze, in which state it is chopped up and distributed like cheese, and even serves as a sort of money to exchange for other commodities. Cheese is made into large flat cakes of about half an inch thick, and almost all rind. The only varieties of drink consist in the liquor remaining after the cheese and butter has been made, the broth from the meat kettle, and snow water. Brandy is of course welcome when it can be obtained, but the Yakuts know no method of preparing it; and in making the well-known liquor called "Kumys," from mares' milk, they fortunately do not understand, as the Tartars do, how to give it an intoxicating property; so that, as used by them, it is an innocent beverage.

The accounts of the prodigious quantities of food that these people can consume at one time, appear so surprising, that only the concurrent testimony of all travellers who have ever visited them, could render them at all credible. Both the Yakuts and the Tungusians make it a principle, it seems, to eat whenever there is food, and never to suffer anything which can possibly be eaten to be lost. A Yakut is also very liberal in his estimate of things that can possibly be eaten, and includes in his bill of fare, soap, candles, and similar delicacies. The pedestrian traveller, Captain Cochrane, once observed a Yakut child crawling on the ground and scraping up, with much relish, the drops of tallow grease that had fallen from a lighted candle.

He offered it a whole candle, and it was eagerly devoured,—a second, and a third ; several pounds of frozen butter, and lastly, a large piece of yellow soap, until the Captain desisted from his experiment, in the fear of committing murder. In confirmation of his statement, the Russian Admiral, Saritcheff, mentions that on one occasion, when an immense quantity of food had been eaten by the Yakuts who accompanied him, they nevertheless complained of the scarcity, and one of them asserted that he was in the habit of dispatching in the course of twenty-four hours, the hind quarter of a large ox, twenty pounds of fat, and a proportionate quantity of melted butter for drink. The Admiral feeling naturally some doubts of the truth of this assertion, resolved to try his powers, and ordered a mess of a thick sort of porridge, made of twenty-five pounds of rice, boiled with three pounds of butter, to be got ready for him ; and the man actually consumed the whole without stirring from the spot, or betraying any other sign of inconvenience than a somewhat increased corpulence.

It is but justice, however, to remember, that these poor gluttons are extremely good-natured and hospitable, and always willing to share with a stranger the food, of which they stand in such need themselves for the satisfaction of their formidable appetites. These instances of gluttony, also, are related of such as had been exposed to frequent danger of famine, from the

arbitrary interference of the Russian government with the mode of life that best suited their situation.

The natives of Siberia, notwithstanding the many difficulties they have had to contend with, have for centuries past enjoyed the advantage of occasional communication with nations more advanced than themselves. They have never been so isolated from the rest of the world as some races of Esquimaux, or as the aborigines of Australia, or of the primeval forests of America. From the earliest times, traders from the south have traversed their country in the search after fossil ivory, and the gold of the Altai Mountains, and have brought among the Siberian tribes the knowledge of metals, and of conditions of society different from their own.

The severity of their terrible climate, where a constant battle with the elements is necessary to maintain mere animal life, and which would task the resources of civilized people to overcome, has probably prevented their more rapid advances; but there are many important differences between the condition of these tribes and that of the absolute savage. In the first place, they have found means to secure a plentiful subsistence, and sufficient clothing and shelter. In their treatment of their women, they show far more gentleness and humanity; they have a greater variety of ideas, and more activity of mind.

The necessity of counting their flocks, has brought

with it a considerable knowledge of numbers,—at least as compared with that possessed by any savage tribe; and the habit of traversing extensive districts in search of pasture, in the absence of other guides, has led them to find their way by the stars, for the observation of which they have often ample opportunity, whilst, like the shepherds of old, “keeping watch over their flocks by night.”

A traveller* inquiring of one of them if he knew what hour it was, was answered very correctly, that it was very late in the evening, but not yet midnight. The Yakut said he knew by the constellation of the Great Bear, which he called the Elk: that at sunset, at that time of year, the tail of the animal stood much higher than its head; that at midnight they were on a level, and that at sunrise, the head would be by far the highest. To us, a clock that varied continually, according to the season, would appear exceedingly inconvenient. The position of the stars, which at one time would show midnight, would at another signify between seven and eight in the evening; and what meant half-past one o'clock in the morning at one season, would point to six at another; so that no little observation and calculation must be requisite, to make even a tolerably accurate estimate of time by such means.

* Erman.

In the intercourse between these people and the Russians, a kind of cypher writing has been invented, which they perfectly understand. It consists of six different kinds of figures, denoting various quantities of skins and their value,—from five kopecks (a small copper coin) to a thousand rubles. During the negotiations, these cyphers are written down on paper, but the natives afterwards cut them on pieces of wood, and preserve them, as memorials of their trading transactions, in their huts.

The first dawns of poetry and the fine arts may be discovered, under however rude forms, amongst nations in the very earliest condition,—among mere savages; but these Siberian tribes not only turn into a kind of song any occurrences that strike the imagination or the feelings,—such as the killing of an infant by a wild beast, or the desertion of a girl by her lover,—but they tell long stories, which, in many points, resemble the fairy tales still in use amongst us, and show notions of various things,—such as walled towns, armor, &c.,—never seen in their own country. We hear of gold and silver, of saddles and bridles, of houses and pillars of steel; but there is an attempt to produce an effect by enormous exaggeration, such as we almost always find in the stories invented by children, or childish nations. We are told of places so far off, that an eagle might fly seven years without stopping before he reached them; of archers so skilful and

strong, that they can send an arrow through nine hills at once, and so on. The character of these stories generally confirms the opinion entertained by many travellers, that the races of people now inhabiting Northern Siberia once dwelt in more pleasant and fertile regions, and were driven to this dreary wilderness by the sword of some Tartar conqueror. The Nomadic races of Siberia exhibit a nearer resemblance to a regular government than any savages. They are divided into clans, of which the eldest member of the family is usually the head, or chief, though in some cases a person is elected to fill the office; and the possession of numerous flocks and herds, of great personal strength, extraordinary stature, or of a high reputation for wisdom, will obtain this honor for an individual not belonging to the tribe. He is not chosen, as among most of the hunting nations, for the temporary purposes of war, which is of extremely rare occurrence among these people, but for the sake of maintaining some kind of order in the society. He interferes to settle disputes, to punish offences, and to maintain such laws or settled customs as exist among them. The inheritance of a father is divided amongst his sons, on whom devolves the duty of maintaining the mother and daughters. Should there be no sons, the widow and the daughters, as well as the cattle, become the property of the nearest kinsman.

As these tribes are in general strikingly free from

the propensity to theft, so frequent among mere savages, disputes are not of very frequent occurrence. Where there is any difficulty in discovering the truth of an accusation, the chief may administer an oath, for which there are several forms. Sometimes the accused party stands forward, and, holding up a knife towards the sun, exclaims, "If I am guilty, may the sun cause disease to rage in my entrails, as if a knife were plunged into them."

Another form is for the accused to mount certain rocks,—such as the celebrated cliff on the shore of Lake Baikal, and utter aloud the wish, that the loss of children, or cattle, death, or some other misfortune, may fall on the speaker, if what he utters be not the truth. A still more solemn form is to make a great fire, slaughter and roast a dog before it, and pray that the person taking the oath, who must be sprinkled with the blood of the animal, may wither away like the dog, if he is speaking falsely.

Duels were formerly common among the Tungusians, in which arrows were exchanged, and many formalities observed; but these now only take place in secret, as they are apparently discountenanced by the Russians.

Murder is not considered as a disgraceful offence, but the murderer is punished with blows, and compelled to maintain the family of his victim. Theft, on

the contrary, is highly dishonorable, and is often remembered through the whole life of the offender.

In the religious system, if it may be called so, of the Tungusians, we still find the Schamans, or conjurers, whom, under one name or another, we meet with among all nations in a rude state. They represent themselves as foreseeing the future, as interpreters of the will of the invisible powers, and mediators with them for less favored mortals.

The deities recognized by the Tungusians are, first, Boa, the Great Spirit, who dwells in the sky, and deposes all care of human affairs to subordinate agents. He knows all things, but never concerns himself about any, although he is benevolent; never punishes any one; and if men implore his aid, will dispose the inferior deities in their behalf. As no one has ever seen him, no image can be made of him, but the Schamans, who boast of possessing his favor, will sometimes bestow his name on a figure made to resemble themselves.

The lower gods are partly good, partly malevolent. The former are seen in the heavenly bodies, or in various natural phenomena; but there is no instance of the deification of any mortal, or of what is called hero-worship. The sun, which is the most distinguished among these subordinate divinities, is frequently invoked and worshipped, in the form of an idol of wood or tin, with a human face. The moon and the night, from

whom come dreams, are the next in dignity. Of the stars, every human being has one as his tutelary or protecting spirit, which has peculiar influence over his destiny. Rings, made of tin, are worn as symbols of these; and the clouds, the rain, the hail, the rainbow, the storm, the wind, are feared as well as thanked for their benefits, although never represented.

Dunda, the earth, is a beneficent being, who bestows all on man, although both she and the god of the waters, to whom fish are sacrificed, are compelled to endure the abode of evil spirits within their bosom. There are also gods of the mountain and forest, of the chase, and of health, of reindeer, of roots and flowers, of children, of women, and of the interior of the tent or home of the family.

The evil deities are appointed to punish the wicked, in which office, as they take a pleasure in it, they sometimes exceed their commission. Over perfectly good people, indeed, they have no power, but these, unluckily, are scarce. These malevolent deities live on terms of great intimacy with the Schamans, who have, according to their own account, much to suffer from them, but for the price of this suffering, gain vast stores of knowledge. They are exceedingly numerous, filling all the earth and the waters, but have no power over the life of man.

The Tungusians look for another life, but expect that it will be merely a continuation or recommence-

ment of the life of this world, and, therefore, place weapons and various utensils near the bodies of the dead ; but they have no fears for the future, saying they believe every man is as good as he can be.

The idols of tin or iron in use among these tribes, are said strikingly to resemble the antique bronze ones found in Italy, and now preserved in the Vatican, and at Florence ; they are very rudely made, having often, when the human face is to be represented, nothing more than dots for the features, and a straight piece nailed across for arms. Many represent animals,—bears, swans, geese, and ducks, &c., since these are supposed to be pleasing to the gods, who often appear in their forms. They are made by the Schamans, who wear great numbers of them dangling to various parts of their dress, and sometimes as many as ten will be hung about a single *yurté* or tent.

In general there are few distinctions of dress among these tribes ; for where the climate is so severe as to overcome all minor considerations, there can be little or no choice. Reindeer skins, and different sorts of furs, are both more easily procured than any other material, and the only ones that would afford sufficient warmth.

But the Schamans, aware of the effect of strange and peculiar appearance in impressing the imagination, have contrived for themselves a very striking costume. They wear three or four broad bands of iron across the

back, furnished with rings, to which idols are attached, as well as to broad collars round their necks, and round the rims of their caps. Their sleeves and leggings are also covered with pieces of iron or tin, and decorated in a similar manner ; figures of large spiders or scorpions serve the purpose of buttons, and stuffed snakes hang down, by way of tassels.

The sacrifices are offered at night, in the interior of the yurté ; and all who are to take part in them being assembled round the fire, the sorcerer prepares his tools, and begins his operations. The most important instrument is the magic drum,—so much in use, time out of mind, among the witches of Lapland. It is made of an oval shape, about three feet long, and with a skin stretched only over one side, and a shallow brim ; so that it is more like a tambourine than what we call a drum. On the skin are painted various figures,—stars, birds, snakes, and others, and it is struck with a flat stick. After this instrumental performance has continued some time, the Schaman begins to sing without accompaniment, and the audience joins in chorus, the wise man leaping all the while, and his tin idols and other trinkets making a prodigious clatter.

When an animal is to be sacrificed, it is slaughtered by the Schaman, and the skin and some of the bones often hung up in the forest, on a sort of scaffolding of cross poles, to which a dead swan or duck, with outstretched wings, is fastened. Sometimes certain ani-

imals are consecrated to the gods,—the fact being pointed out by a piece of red rag attached to the ear or mane ; and, in some instances, the whole herd is thus devoted for a certain period, during which it is lawful to use their milk, but not to kill any of them.

Since the mode of life, and the manners and customs of the native Siberian races are mostly such as have been in some measure forced upon them by the circumstances of their climate and condition, it is not likely they should be able to make much progress without the assistance of some other people in a more advanced state of civilisation ; and it is rather unfortunate for them that the Russians, by whom their country has been conquered, should be, of all the nations of Europe, the one least capable of affording it. The blind have to lead the blind, and the injudicious and tyrannical proceedings of the Russian government, instead of helping forward the rude tribes of Siberia, have, in many instances, driven them back from the pastoral state to the wilder condition of the mere hunter and fisher.

Some tribes, whose fires, it is said, were once as numerous along the banks of the Kolyma “as the stars of heaven,” are entirely extinct ; and districts, where five hundred miles may now be traversed without the sight of a human inhabitant, are shown, by the numerous *tumuli*, or grave hills, to have been, at no very remote period, the dwelling-place of a considera-

ble population. Stern and repulsive as the aspect of the greater part of Siberia is, also, it is not without natural advantages. It is traversed from north to south by gigantic rivers, connected together by a net-work of small streams, such as scarcely any other country in the world can boast, and by means of which, rapid communication might be opened between different districts. The establishment of a few steam-boats on these rivers, would infuse new life into all the countries they traverse ; and even the desolate north possesses, in its vast accumulations of fossil ivory, the tusks of a huge animal called usually the Mammoth, and in its countless swarms of fish, something to exchange for the welcome produce of the south. There is evidently no inaptitude in the natives for receiving instruction ; they are mostly lively and intelligent, and possess an acuteness of the senses, which often supplies the want of advantages enjoyed by more cultivated nations. An instance of their astonishing power of sight is mentioned by M. Anjou, in the case of a Yakut, who pointed out to him the planet Jupiter, and said he had often seen that blue star swallow a small one, and afterwards throw him up again,—showing that he must, without any telescope, have observed the immersion and emersion of one of Jupiter's satellites. The natives found farthest to the north are wonderfully insensible to the cold, frequently setting off on long journeys with no other defence against it than their

ordinary clothing, lying down to sleep at night in the snow with their feet towards a fire, their upper garment pulled off and thrown over their shoulders, and not unfrequently their half naked bodies covered with a thick hoar frost. All travellers concur in praising the goodness and kindness of disposition evinced by these wandering Siberians, and one instance of it, mentioned by Admiral Von Wrangell, does not seem unworthy of a place beside the well known and much talked of instance of generosity in Sir Philip Sidney at the battle of Zutphen. A party had been sent out into the Tundra, under the command of one of the Russian officers, M. Matiaschlin, and had suffered severely from hunger. "By my reckoning," he says, "we were two days' journey from the river Aniu, towards which we began our march, travelling on foot through ravines and over rocks, for twenty-five wersts, when we were too much exhausted to go further. A fire was lighted, and the kettle hung over it as usual, but we had absolutely nothing eatable to put into it. Whilst we were gathered round it in silence, one of the Yakuti called me aside, and taking a wild duck out of his haversack, unseen by the rest, he told me he had killed it with a stone, when he was behind the rest of the party. 'There,' said he, 'take it, and eat it alone; it is too little to do good to us all, and you are very tired.'"

It would be well for the civilized Christian nations of the earth, if such a spirit of disinterested charity and kindness, as dictated this offer, were common among them.

THE
PASTORAL TRIBES
OF THE ASIATIC STEPPES.

THE most complete examples of the full development of the pastoral mode of life, which we can anywhere meet with, are to be found among the nations of the Mongol family who occupy the Steppes,—immense plains, or long waving hills, covered with rich coarse grass, which stretch like a broad belt across Central Asia, from the Caspian Sea to the Pacific, with so little interruption, that it is said an ox might eat his way through it quietly from Russia to China.

It is a table land, appearing mostly like a plain to those travelling upon it, but in reality of great elevation,—often as much as ten thousand feet above the level of the sea, and rising in a succession of broad terraces to the foot of the Himalaya range, which contains the loftiest mountains in the world. No other country appears to offer such facilities to the occupa-

tion of the herdsman and shepherd ; for besides its almost boundless extent of pasturage, it is the native home of nearly all the most useful species of animals—the ox, the horse, the camel, the goat, the ass, the sheep ; even most domestic poultry appear to have proceeded originally from these regions or those bordering upon them ; and as long as the inhabitants find abundant space and means of support for their countless flocks and herds, it does not seem very likely that they will exert themselves to change a mode of life, which they and their forefathers have followed from the earliest times of which we have any record.

There is much, also, in the nature of the country, which, by inducing them to wander perpetually from place to place, opposes obstacles to their further progress. Its great height and openness, and the general absence of woods, expose it to great extremes of heat and cold ; and to escape, as much as possible, from the suffering occasioned by these vicissitudes, it is usual for them to spend the winter only in the southern, warmer regions, to move northwards as the spring advances, to the colder climates, where grass is still abundant, even in the month of June, and in the hottest season of July and August to exchange these again, wherever it is possible, for the low swampy lands on the banks of rivers or lakes.

Other races, which have depended on their flocks and herds for subsistence, without having been compelled

to this perpetual changing of their abode, have in time begun to improve the country,—to dig wells, to drain marshes, to make water-courses, to build houses, and erect altars and temples to their gods; but none of these useful labors, excepting only the first, to which they have been absolutely forced if they would not die of thirst, have these wandering hordes ever performed. Nothing like agriculture can be said to exist among them; for though a few small patches of land, near the rivers, are sometimes roughly tilled, to raise a little millet or barley, it is done only by the women, or the very poorest classes, and never thought of as a regular occupation. They have, therefore, little or nothing of the love of country which is the beginning of so much that is good; and instead of advancing, like other nations, have, as we have said, remained nearly in the same state for thousands of years.

Not only do all the races occupying these countries at the present day, and called by so many different names,—Mongols, Kalkas, Tartars, Eluths, Kalmucks, and Ogars, resemble each other most closely, both in personal appearance and habits of life, but they have no less likeness to the Barbarian races, who overran Europe fourteen or fifteen hundred years ago. The description given of the person and tent of Attila, called by the writers of the time, from the terror he inspired, the “Scourge of God,” might pass for that of a Mongol prince of the present day. The Mongols

have stout, squat figures, with high, broad shoulders, large, muscular bodies, and short legs,—a disproportion that is probably occasioned by their passing so much of their lives on horseback, and sitting with their legs doubled under them. Their eyes are set in the oblique position, also noticed among all the Esquimaux tribes, and they have swarthy complexions, broad, flat noses, and wide mouths, but mostly fine, white, regular teeth. The most remarkable difference between the Mongols of the modern times and their ancestors, is, that those of our days are described as well disposed and peaceful people, whilst the Huns and Scythians were warriors so fierce and terrible, that the writers of those ages seem unable to find words hard and dreadful enough to convey their idea of them. This is, however, a difference that may easily be accounted for by different circumstances, by the altered condition of the nations by whom they are surrounded, and by the character of their religion.

Among the Mongols of the present day, although they manifest no ferocity of temper, the whole arrangement of society is still such as to be always prepared for war. Their country has been frequently described as a vast nursery for soldiers, consisting of many camps, equipped, provisioned, and ready to march at a moment's notice. Every man among the common or "*black* people," as they are called, must have a horse and arms always in readiness to appear

in the field at the command of his chief ; they are all assembled from time to time in a great camp, the old or ill-mounted dismissed, and replaced by others ; the whole body divided into hundreds and fifties, and leaders appointed for each. A hundred and fifty Mongol tents, or families, make a squadron ; thirteen squadrons a banner ; and a number of banners a horde ; governed by a Khan, or Prince : who is supplied by his subjects with a moderate contribution in cattle, as well as with the number of servants and shepherds necessary to guard his flocks and herds. Notwithstanding this military constitution of society, however, which has been continued from the remotest period, we hear little or nothing of wars taking place among them at present.

The duties of the Khan are by no means confined to those of a military chief ; it is his business to decide all disputes among the people ; and in times of scarcity, which sometimes occur from extraordinary severity of weather, or disease among the cattle, the princes and rich families are bound to afford the means of subsistence to their poorer neighbors. On the occurrence of a marriage in his family, as well as on some other occasions, the Khan receives from his subjects, besides their regular contribution, an additional one of a certain fixed amount ; for every ten families, or tents, one horse, and a wagon drawn by an ox or camel ; from every one who possesses three or

more cows, a pail of milk ; from the owner of five cows or more, a pitcher of kumys, or spirit, distilled from milk ; and from the owner of a hundred sheep, a piece of felt.

By the great hordes of Mongolia, a tribute is also paid to the Emperor of China ; some send every year a white camel and eight white horses ; some a certain number of sheep ; some fifty bags or skins of melted butter, or twenty wild boars' heads ; others, falcons and dogs, eagles' feathers, &c. : but as these presents receive a handsome return from his Celestial Majesty, in tea, satin, nankeen, silver tea-pots, and other costly articles, they may, perhaps, rather be considered as expressions of good-will than tokens of subjection. On occasions of distress, also, when it is thought that the means of the rich are not sufficient to meet the demands made on them, a petition is sent to the Emperor of China, who usually despatches an officer to inquire into the facts, and a sum of money to purchase provisions for the necessitous.

The dwellings of these pastoral nations are nothing more than tents, consisting of sets of hurdles of twenty or thirty poles each, and fastened together with leathern thongs, which can be drawn closer or stretched out wider at pleasure. The roof is made of a conical shape, with shorter poles, one end of which is drawn through a wooden hoop in the centre, while the others rest on the top of the hurdles, planted in a circle, and

tied together with ropes of camel's hair or wool. The whole scaffolding is then smeared over with red marl or burnt ochre, and covered by the poor with skins, but by the more wealthy with carpets, obtained from the Chinese or Russians, or with felt coverings and rush matting, made by their poorer countrymen. A curtain, which can be drawn up at pleasure, hangs down over the entrance ; the roof has two or more coverings ; and a sort of funnel hangs down through the wooden hoop in the middle, and serves for a chimney. The wood-work of these tents will last about ten years ; but the coverings require to be renewed much oftener, and, indeed, are generally in holes before a year is out.

The fire is made on the ground in the centre, and over it is placed a tripod, as a stand for a large shallow iron dish used for cooking, such as are made in great numbers at the iron works of Siberia expressly for the use of these Mongolian races. The rich sometimes have their cooking done outside the tent, and in the interior merely a brasier with glowing embers, for the sake of warmth. Opposite to the entrance of the tent is the couch of the master,—a low bedstead, with pillows of thick felt, covered with Morocco or Russia leather, and filled with wool or feathers. Among the rich, the earthen floor is covered with felt, and the bedstead furnished with a curtain. On either side are piled up the chests and leathern bags, containing

clothes and various property, all covered with carpeting ; and those who possess an idol hang it up near the head of the bed, and on certain festival days burn a lamp beneath it. On each side of the tent are the sleeping places for guests, as well as for unmarried sons and daughters ; and around hang the bows and arrows, guns, saddles and bridles, &c., as well as the leathern vessels for milk, and other household utensils belonging to the women. The place of tables is supplied by low wooden benches, four or five inches broad, and raised very little above the ground ; and that of chairs by pieces of felt spread out on the floor for seats, but which, as well as the hangings of the tent, are filthy in the extreme, and covered, especially in the winter, with mud, ashes, bones, pieces of gnawed meat, and other indescribable things. The better kinds of seats are made of many folds of felt sewed together, and the best are covered with blue or green cloth, with a square piece of red in the middle ; but these are kept rolled up, and only used on grand occasions.

Opposite to the entrance is sometimes placed a low wooden table, upon which stand copper idols and vessels used in their service ; and on the right side is the place of honor especially appointed for the wife (there is seldom more than one) ; it is a kind of sanctuary for her, whence she has free leave to scold any one who may offend her to her heart's content, or even to

pelt them with any of her household chattels that may come within her reach. As long as she does not move from her place, these compliments must not be returned.

Both sexes wear trowsers and long robes of nankeen or colored silk, confined by a girdle often richly ornamented ; and over it a short pelisse trimmed with fur, or in winter made entirely of it, and boots of Morocco or Russia leather. The men strengthen the soles with nails, or pieces of iron in the form of horse-shoes, and stick weapons in their girdles, as well as suspend from them their tobacco-pouches, tinder-boxes, and drinking-cups, which a Mongol always carries about with him. Silver and copper rings and buckles, strings of pearl and red coral, silken tassels, and various kinds of amulets, are worn as ornaments, and on grand occasions, even greater splendor is exhibited. A Russian Mission, which crossed this country in its way to China in 1820, met a troop of Mongols returning from Ourga, where they had been adoring the "*Koukouktou*" (a religious ceremony to which we shall presently refer), and who made a very brilliant appearance. The chief was accompanied by his mother, wife, sisters, younger brothers, and a numerous suite, all armed with bows and arrows, and mounted on fine horses. They wore caps of sable, and robes of beautiful blue satin, with silken zones of interwoven silver ; and not

only their dresses, but even their saddles, were decorated with large cornelians.

The poorer classes of course do not share this finery, but are clothed in sheep-skins,—in sufficient quantity, however, to protect them from the cold. In some seasons, sheep-skins are worn by all classes, on account of their great warmth. The Mongol cap, which bears the pretty little convenient name of “*Chatschilgamalachai*,” consists of a sort of cushion, stuffed with wool, and covered with lamb’s skin, with a flat crown of yellow cloth, decorated with a large red, silk tassel. This ornament is considered indispensable, and those who cannot afford it, supply its place with a bit of red rag, which equally well answers the intended purpose of pointing them out as disciples of Buddha. Rich women and priests wear the “*chatschilgamalachai*,” trimmed with costly fur, and have the crown profusely embroidered; but notwithstanding all this luxury of attire, these people are little superior in cleanliness to the mere savages formerly described. Their under garments and trowsers are generally worn without washing till they drop off; and as they eat their food with their fingers, and then wipe them on their boots, or on the ground, it may be supposed they are not in a very delicate condition. There are, however, beaux and belles among them, who never make a journey without carrying their whole wardrobe with them, and whose chief diversion on days of festival, is to disappear from

the company and return as often as possible in a new dress.

As the Mongols are in too low a state of civilisation to have discovered the great advantages of a division of labor in arts and manufactures, such as are practised among them are mostly carried on by each family for its own use. Of these the most important is the preparation of leather, an article used for a great variety of different purposes, including the manufacture of milk-pails and tea-pots. It is wholly the business of the women, who, though by no means subjected to such severe toil as among savages, are regarded as domestic servants, and have to perform rather an unfair share of the work. The skins have to be washed and scraped all over, then soaked in sour milk, then dried and soaked again several times, and then worked and pulled in all directions with the hands and knees, till they are perfectly soft. Then comes the smoking, for which pits are dug and filled with damp wood, coarse grass, and whatever will burn with a thick smoke; the skins are spread on a wooden frame over it, and after this must be again worked on the hands and knees, though for the thick leather, of which the soles of the boots are made, notched logs of wood are employed.

The vessels to hold liquids, which are required to be as hard as horn, and very lasting, are made by sewing the fresh skins into the desired shapes with the sinews of oxen or horses, and moulding them with their hands

as they dry,—of course a most tedious and laborious process. Sometimes they are stuffed out with sand, that they may dry into a large hollow shape; and, when necessary, metal tubes are inserted, to make spouts for tea-pots, or necks of bottles. Leathern vessels are often made so large as to require the whole skin of an ox or horse. The manufacture of felt, for the coverings of tent and floors, of hair lines, and of all kinds of clothing, the preparation of food, and the care of children, leaves, we may suppose, very little idle time to the women; even though the men, showing a little more consideration for them than the North American Indians, do assist them in packing the goods for a journey, putting up the tents, and making hair lines, as well as in attending to the cattle, and slaughtering the animals required for food.

As a wife is so useful an assistant, a young man is naturally desirous to obtain one as soon as he can possibly afford it. The price of a young lady, belonging to what may be called the middling classes, is usually about fifteen cows, fifteen horses, three camels, and twenty sheep; but the father is expected to allow her a marriage portion of about equal value in clothing, made and unmade, and household utensils. The price of the bride is paid on betrothment, which may take place after she has completed her fourteenth year, but not sooner; and if the bridegroom does not fetch her away before she is twenty, complaint is made to the

chief, or prince, whose business it is to find her another husband ; but the former bridegroom, in that case, forfeits whatever he has paid as a deposit. Over every forty families is a kind of superintendent, who has to see that at least four marriages take place every year ; and if the funds of the bridegrooms are found to be insufficient, they are made up by contributions from the rich.

The first point to be ascertained when a wedding is about to take place, is, under what signs the bride and bridegroom were born ; for if it should happen that the lady's star commands the gentleman's, she will certainly, it is supposed, exercise an undue authority over her husband. The Mongols reckon twelve signs, corresponding with our months ; they are the mouse, the ox, the tiger, the hare, the dragon, the serpent, the horse, the ram, the ape, the hen, the dog, the swine. Marriages between persons born respectively under the ox and the tiger, the hen and the horse, the swine and the ape, are prohibited, as these are hostile signs.

When this point has been satisfactorily settled, the person appointed to act for the bridegroom, his solicitor, we may call him, settles with the friends of the bride how many sheep and oxen, and what quantity of goods and chattels, of various kinds, are to be given on either side. The bridegroom then musters all his relations and friends, sometimes to the number of a hundred or more, and taking with him vast quantities of boiled

meat, and, what is quite indispensable, a leg of mutton for the young lady in particular, repairs to the tent of the papa, and there, after adorning the idols, and prostrating himself before them, indulges in a grand carouse.

In the meantime the new tent, bestowed by the parents of the bride, as part of the marriage portion, is set up, and the lama is called in to fumigate it, and perform in it the due amount of professional exercises. A fire is then kindled before the door of the tent, the entrance of which is always turned towards the east, and a piece of felt being laid before it on the ground, the young couple are required to kneel down upon it. The lama then inquires if they enter the married state voluntarily and without any constraint, exhorts the bride to obedience and the bridegroom to forbearance, and calls for a boiled shoulder of mutton, which he places before them, requiring them both to lay hold of the bone. This is the moment for the young lady to manifest a becoming degree of reluctance ; but if her modest hesitation lasts too long, it is usual for some one to come behind her, and force her hand down upon the bone. The lama then repeats several blessings, and afterwards calls out two of the young men present, who bend down the heads of the newly married pair three times to the ground, commanding them to honor the sun, the fire, and the earth. Some travellers give a different account of the words spoken on

these occasions, and translate them, "Honor the sun, honor butter, honor the leg of mutton;" but it may be that the words are not always the same. The friends of both parties, standing in readiness behind them, then suddenly snatch their caps off their heads and throw them into the hut to a lama standing ready to receive them, and as especial good luck is betokened for the party whose cap goes in first, it is a great point of friendship to be as quick as possible. The bridal pair is then led into the tent, where they receive another blessing, have their caps placed on their heads again, and are seated side by side on the ground, and ordered to eat out of the same dish, as a symbol of the future community of goods between them; and the guests also now come in and begin to eat again. The ceremony is then concluded by the younger among the matrons of the party making a sudden attack on the bride, and tearing her away not very gently from the midst of her virgin companions, who, on their parts, are bound to make what resistance they can, so that something like a general battle ensues among the ladies of the party. Since we do not find, however, that the young damsels are ever successful in retaining their companion, we may conclude that, as in stage combats, which party is to be victorious has been previously settled by amicable arrangement. The married ladies now invest their new associate with a robe of a peculiar form, worn only by

wives, plait her hair afresh, after a new fashion, and she may then be considered as installed in the honors and immunities of a Mongol matron, and much in the same position as a young lady among us, who has just returned from her wedding tour.

The religion of Buddhism, professed by all the pure Mongol tribes, is superior to any that would have been likely to arise amongst themselves, having been communicated to them from a people in a much higher state of civilisation. It is of great antiquity, having been founded in India about a thousand years before the Christian era. In spite of its strange mythology, it teaches sublime doctrines and pure precepts of morality: it recognizes the existence of one great Supreme Being, and the immortality of the soul. Its adherents believe, that by virtuous actions eternal happiness may be gained, and that vice will be punished, but not eternally. It expressly condemns not only murder, robbery, and all kinds of licentiousness, but threatening, calumny, and "*idle discourse*," nay, even such sins as the heart only is conscious of,—envy, hatred, and evil thoughts. It enjoins its professors to save any one's life, to be charitable, to observe cleanliness, to speak the truth, "*to speak politely*," to preach and preserve peace, to be contented with their station. The manner of life of its distinguished professors has frequently been exactly that of the early saints of the Roman Catholic Church; they have de-

voted themselves to religious exercises, to severe abstinence and constant contemplation, and have lived apart from the world. The monastic life is still so much encouraged by the Buddhists, that in Lassa, the capital of Thibet, where the Dalai Lama, the present head of the religion, resides, there are, it is said, no less than three thousand convents. Magnificent external monuments of this religion are still visible in India and the island of Java,*—such as the ruins of a gigantic temple, and five large subterranean halls, exhibiting skill in architecture and sculpture, far surpassing that of the modern inhabitants of these countries. It has spread over the greater part of Asia, and has undoubtedly exercised great influence in softening the character of the once fierce and wild tribes of Mongolia and Tartary. Even what we must consider one of its errors, the doctrine of the transmigration of human souls into the bodies of the lower animals, has introduced a spirit of humanity towards them, very striking in a people who, from the necessity of their position, are compelled to slaughter them for food.

The reverence paid to their lamas, or priests, by the Mongols, is very great,—equal or superior to that paid sometimes to the Roman Catholic clergy in the middle ages of European history. “You will attain,” says a Mongol writing, “eternal felicity, if you

* The temple of Boro-Bador, and the five halls near the city of Bang, on the road from Guzerat to Malva.

honor the Lamas ; the sun itself, which dispels impenetrable mists, rises only that honor may be rendered to the lamas ; the most enormous sins obtain pardon by showing respect to the learned lamas. The blessing of the Grand Lama gives bodily strength, communicates great advantages to youth, and confers glory. If you sincerely implore, during a whole day, the benediction of a lama, all the sins committed during innumerable generations may be effaced ; and, on the other hand, any offence to a lama annihilates the merit acquired by a thousand generations."

Every father of a family considers it his duty to bring up one of his sons to the priesthood, so that the lamas are very numerous ; but they are by no means idle members of society. They are exempt, indeed, from military service, but, in case of necessity, they are bound to attend to the cattle. They are the only physicians, and the only persons who give instruction in reading and writing, which the Mongols learn for the sake of reading their books of prayer,—almost the only books, indeed, which they possess. The lamas are also at liberty to buy and sell, and attend to domestic affairs, although they must remain unmarried, and observe many of the rules of a strict monastic life.

As disciples of Buddha the Mongols of course acknowledge the Dalai Lama, as their great high priest, or supreme pontiff ; but they have also a pontiff of their own, whom they believe to be a peculiar object of af-

fection to the Supreme Being, and to receive whose benediction they will undertake long and fatiguing journeys. This is the Koukougton of Ourga.

There are ten grand priests, or *koukougtons*, who hold the first rank after the Dalai Lama, and are supposed to be acquainted with all events, past, present, and future ; to have the power to remit sins, and to enjoy the privilege of having their souls at death pass into other human bodies. The Dalai Lama, as the head of the Church, points out the children into whom the souls of the former *koukougtons* have passed or are about to pass ; and these children are generally of distinguished families, and are educated in a manner suitable to their future dignity. As soon as a child has been recognized as a *koukougton*, a grand procession is made to meet him, with the most lively demonstrations of joy ; and he is conducted, in great pomp, to the residence of his predecessor, where he is confided to the care of the lamas, who henceforward permit very few persons to see him. Those who enjoy this favor he receives sitting cross-legged upon a splendid altar, never saluting even princes who come from distant regions to pay their homage, but at the utmost laying his hand on the head of the worshipper, in token of the pardon he grants to their sins.

In the country of the Kalkas, south of Lake Baikal, stands a temple much frequented by the Mongol tribes. It is built on the side of a mountain, and is about fif-

teen hundred feet in circumference, and surrounded by a wall, which, as well as the building itself, is of bricks, painted red. At the main entrance are planted two beams as high as masts, and behind the wall, on one side, stand seven tents, where the lamas live, who serve the temple ; and on the other is a wooden building, where they dine, and hold their assemblies. In the vestibule of the temple are four gigantic wooden figures, representing warriors in full armor. The first has a red face, and holds in his hands a serpent ; the second has a white face, and he holds a parasol in his right hand, and in his left a mouse ; the third has a blue face, and a sword ; and the fourth, a yellow face, and a lute. These statues represent beings superior to men, who are supposed to be seven hundred feet high, and to live two thousand five hundred years, in different regions of Mount Soumer, the centre of the universe, which extends fifty thousand miles towards each of the four quarters of the world, and has seven gilded summits.

The interior walls of the temple are hung with silk, adorned with representations of the most revered saints ; and round the wooden pillars are hung drums, standards, and kadasks, or sacred ribbons. Opposite to the entrance is a large copper idol, and near it seats for the elder lamas, with cushions covered with yellow satin. On the floor are spread carpets of felt for the inferior priests. Behind the temple, against the north wall,

stands a gilt image of Buddha, with a table before it, on which are placed dishes of butter and milk, and copper gilt cups of iced water and tea ; more innocent offerings than the blood-stained sacrifices of so many heathen altars.

It is not, however, only in temples made with hands that the supreme beneficent being, in whom the Mongols believe, is supposed to reside. They regard him as diffused throughout all nature, but especially present in objects of vast size, lofty rocks and mountains, broad rivers, and mighty trees. These accordingly become objects of devotion ; and near them the Mongol raises, with solemn ceremonies, under the direction of his lamas, hillocks, or *obos*, as they are called, of stone, sand, earth, or wood ; and here he prostrates himself to implore the cure of diseases afflicting his family or cattle, victory over his enemies, and, in all cases, the mercy of the Great Spirit of the Mountains and Valleys.

There are also, in some places, *soubourguns*, or chapels, of stone or wood, of a pyramidal form, which are built by rich people for the expiation of their sins, or in the hope of future reward. On the consecration of these *soubourguns*, hundreds of little cones of clay, called *Tsatsa*, are thrown into them, as symbolic images of deified persons. These ought properly to be composed of nine kinds of valuable materials,—gold, silver, jewels, &c. ; but as few are able to afford a sufficient

quantity of these, they mostly content themselves with mingling a small portion of these precious articles with clay. The number of these gifts must not be less than a hundred, but the more the better ; and every Mongol who passes a soubourgan must stop, make three prostrations, go three times round it, and throw in something as an offering,—were it only a lock of hair, or a chip of wood.

One of the most curious articles found in the temples of Buddha is a machine intended to serve the purposes of a prayer-book for those who cannot read. It is a chest with many angles, turning on an axis, and covered with prayers in the Mongol and Tabetan languages, in gold letters. Into the chest are also put prayers in both languages ; and worshippers coming to the temple kneel before it, and, repeating a few holy words, turn it round and round as long as their zeal prompts them ; these turnings of the chest being considered as efficacious as recited prayers. Some pious persons will whirl away at a great rate and for a long time, and seem to care very little about interruptions, provided they are not absolutely laughed at.

In general, clamorous prayers, loud music, pilgrimages, and splendid processions, form an important part of the Lamaic religion ; but besides these, which may be considered its legitimate observances, a great deal of secret conjuration is practised, which is not approved by the regular priests. This need not surprise

us, if we consider for how many hundred years the existence of witches and wizards was an article of universal belief among the Christian nations of Europe,—if, indeed, it may be considered as entirely abandoned; and that recourse was frequently had to their assistance, even by those who abhorred them. A great number of conjurors, of both sexes, are found in Mongolia, as well as among the ruder Nomadic tribes of Siberia; but they mostly belong to the poorer classes of the community, and are applied to by those who cannot afford to pay for the prayers and ceremonies of the more regular practitioners, the priests of Buddha. These schamans bless cattle, distribute charms against their various diseases and little images of household gods, rag dolls, considered to be good for pains in the stomach, and, in general, serviceable in the promotion of domestic happiness. Similar idols, intended as tutelary deities of sheep and cattle, are occasionally made even by the lamas themselves,—anxious, we may suppose, to take the business out of the hands of ignorant and unorthodox pretenders.

The Russian traveller, Pallas, witnessed an incantation, performed by a sorceress in a Mongol tent, for the benefit of a man whose wife was sick, and who had himself fallen into necessitous circumstances. A day having arrived which was declared propitious, a sheep intended to be sacrificed was brought into the tent, and slaughtered there by the officiating witch.

The heart, breast bone, and several other parts, were then taken out, and the rest cut up and placed in a cauldron, and left to boil until the day began to decline. The kettle was then taken from the fire, an image of Buddha set up opposite the door of the tent, and a lamp kindled beneath it; the boiled mutton was now poured into a trough, and brought by two assistants to the sorceress and the master of the tent, who had seated themselves outside, and a certain number of pieces were selected, tied up in a sack, and placed near the witch, while one of the bones was suspended by a red silk string over the fire. After various antics, the company fell on the remainder of the mutton and ate it up. After this they set to work again, going through a great number of intricate manoeuvres, not worth detailing, and making sacrifices of fat, milk, sugar, and raisins, to sundry spirits. In conclusion, the sorceress took a bell in her left hand, such as are used in the Buddhist temples, and a whip in her right, and began tossing herself about with wild gestures, and uttering loud and apparently frantic invocations to spirits of the air and all whom the matter concerned; working hard in this way for a full hour till she was in the most violent perspiration, and in a proper mood for prophecy, being occasionally held during the performance by her two assistants, who appeared very much inclined to laugh at the whole proceeding. She then announced to the master of the tent a great deal

of good fortune that awaited him ; and other Mongols who were present, put various questions to her concerning their future destiny,—all of which she answered in loud tone, between a song and a scream. Then there was another feast of boiled mutton, and towards midnight the party separated,—the wise woman receiving two white handkerchiefs, in each of which a new piece of money was tied up, as a fee for her services. The bones of the animal sacrificed must be left lying on the hearth till they are consumed ; but the bladebone of the shoulder is carefully laid aside, as most valuable for prophetic purposes.

Most of these magic ceremonies, and especially the mingling of things considered sacred with others which are forbidden, strikingly resemble former practices of European witches, as detailed in their trials and confessions,—the image of Buddha holding among the Mongols the place of the Bible among the witches of Europe.

The sacred books of the Mongols, which are very numerous, are written on long thin slips of paper, in lines going perpendicularly from the top to the bottom of the page, and then wrapped up in handkerchiefs, and pressed between two thin boards. Those written in the Tibetan language hold the highest rank, as they contain only prayers, and are called, therefore, books of salvation. They are treated with so much reverence, that it is said neither priest nor layman ever

takes one in his hand without a solemn expression in his face ; and it is to symbolize this reverence that the lamas, before they open them, wash their hands and rinse their mouths.

Most of their prayers they do not, however, pretend to understand the meaning of, saying it is not necessary that they should. The one most frequently used,—the one that every pious follower of Buddha repeats, if possible, a thousand times a day, is, “ *Our man i padma houn* ;” words for which our best Oriental scholars can offer no other explanation than “Oh, precious lotus !”—but if a Mongol is asked their signification, he answers, that volumes must be written to express their meaning. These words are written on the banners, and on everything pertaining to the service of the temple ; and to every one of them a miraculous power of averting all sorts of dangers is ascribed.

On account of their numerous flocks and herds, the Mongol migrations are very frequent,—in many cases every third or fourth day. The great chiefs, however, do not change their abode so often ; and in winter sometimes remain as much as a month in one place,—keeping, in order to spare the trouble of frequent movings, only as many cattle near them as are necessary for subsistence, and for carrying baggage. His highness does not, indeed, hesitate to make free with a horse, a cow, or a sheep, belonging to a subject, should

he stand in need of it ; although it must not be forgotten, that these are usually counted and paid for at the end of the year. The spots chosen for winter encampments are, if possible, such as will supply wood and reeds for fuel ; but as these are often only barely sufficient for cooking purposes, the lower classes suffer much from cold. In the spring, the driest tracts are selected, as the water remaining from the melted snow makes them more habitable at that season than any other. Summer and autumn bring these wanderers into the best watered districts they can find.

A migration is generally begun at break of day, and preparation made for it the evening before, by bringing the beasts of burden and cattle near to the tents. As soon as morning dawns, the men go out to catch the horses and camels, some of which are cunning enough to guess what is intended, and so start off at the most distant glimpse of the instrument used for the purpose,—a long flexible pole, with a noose at the end to throw over the animal's head. It is sometimes as much as an hour's work, and could hardly be done at all but for the exertions of the trained horse which the Mongol rides, and which appears to take great delight in catching the fugitive. Whilst some are thus engaged, others are occupied in unfastening the hair lines and cords of the tents, pulling up the poles, and tying them together, rolling up the coverings, and packing the whole, ready to be laid on the backs of

the camels. Three are generally sufficient to carry the whole property of a moderately opulent Mongol, though the chattels of a prince require seven or eight. Before the march begins, a grand tea-drinking takes place, as the Tartars do not like to begin a journey fasting ; and the few who are so poor as not to have any tea, content themselves with a bowl of sour milk.

The chief sets off first, as he has to choose the spot for the next encampment ; and this is often the same that his tribe has occupied the year before, where it has not been burnt or eaten bare by other hordes. Should this prove to be the case, he goes on further. When he arrives at a place which he thinks suitable, he plants his standard ; and after riding about the ground, to examine the pasture, orders a carpet to be spread out, on which he lies down till the camels come up and his tent can be pitched. As long as the march lasts, there may be seen, covering its whole line, the camels in larger or smaller groups, each with a single leader ; between them troops of mares, cows, and sheep. Sometimes comes a crowd of priests, or people of the lower order smoking, or engaged in confidential discourse ; and on either flank are seen flying parties of sportsmen as light cavalry, pursuing wolves, foxes, or wild goats.

The camels belonging to the chief are usually decorated with colored woollen bridles, or with blue and red trappings, with a handsome tassel hanging down

over the tail. As each division of the horde arrives at the halting-place, it begins to pitch the tents ; neighbors find themselves again near each other, and in a few hours, what had been an unpeopled wilderness, is alive with the hum of active life, covered with hundreds of movable habitations, and with the almost countless flocks and herds that accompany them,—to be restored, however, again, in a few days, to the silence and solitude of inanimate nature.

The Mongol tents are always pitched at a considerable distance from each other, in order to leave room for the flocks and herds to feed among them ; and the town, or camp, is divided into several quarters,—the priests' quarter, where the tents of the lamas are pitched, so as to form an oval, with the large prayer tent, or temple, in the midst ; the Vice-Khan's, or Prince's quarter ; and the market quarter, or bazaar : around these are clustered the habitations of the lower classes, which are not only much smaller, but mostly ragged and dirty. The tent covered with felt, which serves as the palace of the wandering sovereign, is distinguished by a wide space left round it, and a double line of spears leaning against horizontal poles. In the inside, the Prince may mostly be seen engaged in the exercise of his judicial functions, while seated cross-legged on a pile of carpets, and often getting on with devotional business at the same time, by repeating prayers, and slipping along very diligently the

beads of his rosary. Around the tent are ranged a number of chests, containing his movable property, and frequently seated upon them the younger male branches of the royal family, discussing messes of boiled meat, served in wooden bowls, exactly similar to those which Attila and his family are said always to have made use of, notwithstanding the quantities of gold and silver plate, which he had collected in his very profitable travels through the provinces of the Roman empire. Costly articles of this description are even now by no means uncommon in the tents of the Mongols, and they are often intermingled with large pieces of beef, or horse-flesh, hung up to dry, as if a silversmith's and butcher's shop had joined in partnership.

The food of these nations, apart from the uncleanly manner of its preparation, is not of an unpleasant kind. Horseflesh, it is true, is not an article we should very willingly admit into our "*cuisine*;" but setting aside the influence of custom, there is certainly nothing more disgusting in it than in most other kinds of animal food. The races who occupy the country generally known as Independent Tartary, use a great deal of wheat and flour, which they procure from the agricultural settlements on the Russian Steppes, preserving it, like the ancient Greeks, in sacks made of skins. The Tartars also get from the Russians melons and various kinds of vegetables, and use many kinds of

edible plants and roots which are found in the countries they traverse ; but the Eastern Mongols profess the greatest distaste for any kind of vegetable food, saying, "Herbs were made for beasts, and the beasts of the field for man."

Most of the Nomadic people of Asia make great use of an article called "brick tea," which serves both for drink and food. It is brought from the tea manufactories of China, where the dry, dirty, and damaged leaves and stalks of the tea are thrown aside, and afterwards mixed with a glutinous substance, pressed into moulds, and dried in ovens, in blocks of the size and shape of bricks, whence the name has been given. The usual mode of using it is to pound a piece of it in a mortar, throw the powder into an iron kettle full of boiling water, and suffer it to remain a long time upon the fire. A little salt and milk is then added, and sometimes flour fried in oil.

Water is seldom drunk till it has been boiled ; and even milk is not drunk fresh, but made into a kind of whey, by boiling it with rennet. The curd is then used for cheese. The butter appears to be less like what we call by that name than what is called "clouted cream" in some parts of England. Immediately after milking, the milk is generally poured into a large trough, which is one of the most necessary articles of housekeeping, and never wanting in any tent. This vessel is never cleaned, and has usually a sour re-

mainder from the former store, besides a crust of stale curd all round it, giving it anything but an agreeable smell.

“In every tent there is generally a kettle on the fire, full of tea, mixed with milk, butter, and salt; and the weary traveller may at all times enter a tent and quench his thirst with brick tea, but he must have his own wooden cup, which a Mongol always carries about with him as an article indispensably necessary.”

However little we may find to object to in the materials of food employed by these races, it must nevertheless be confessed that there is much in the style of the cookery to cause a shudder in the most enthusiastic traveller. It is considered a sin to wash out any vessel, not only on account of the frequent scarcity of water, but because the remains of food left sticking about it would then be wasted. The favorite method of cleansing it is by sweeping the fingers round, and sometimes by *licking* it out; and the flavor of yesterday's horseflesh is usually strongly perceptible on the tea, while the bowl of milk is seasoned by bits of garlic, which have served as the condiment of the preceding evening's meal. Pieces of meat are flung into the kettle to boil, without any one objecting to the bits of grass, clay, hairs, or any other extraneous substance that may chance to be sticking upon them. The water in the tea-kettle is usually full of ashes and dirt; and, in short, nowhere could we find a more perfect illus-

tration of the proverb, which tells us that "Meat is sent from Heaven, but cooks—from the opposite direction."

The principal meals are taken in the morning and evening, and always commenced by setting apart a certain portion as a sacrifice to the gods. This is done in a very reverential manner with uncovered head, and in sacred vessels, never used for any other purpose ; but among the poorest classes, who do not always possess such vessels, the custom is less rigidly observed. Neither tablecloths nor napkins, knives nor forks, are of course to be met with ; and, considering the general habits of these people, it seems rather surprising that they commonly wash, or at least pour water over their hands, before eating. After a meal, the fingers are either licked or wiped upon the boots, the felt carpets on which the company sit, or the grassy floor of the tent.

CALMUCKS AND KIRGHIS,

OR

COSSACKS OF INDEPENDENT TARTARY.



HOWEVER tedious may be the monotony of the measureless sea of grass, which constitutes the landscape beyond the South-Eastern limits of the Russian territory, the agricultural settlers who have established themselves there, are not pleased to see it enlivened by the appearance of a picturesque troop of wild horsemen scouring over the plain, for the sight is generally followed by the loss of their cattle and sheep. The existence of these wandering tribes is usually first made known to a traveller who crosses the frontier, by the complaints which he hears of their depredations; but if he proceeds further into their country, he forms a better opinion of them, as he finds them living for the most part peaceably enough on the produce of their flocks and herds.

It is not very easy to settle the exact locality of

racés in perpetual movement ; but the two great branches of the Mongolian family, called Calmucks and Kirghis, are found mostly in the vast plains of Independent Tartary. Of the Kirghis hordes, the one which occupies the well watered and fertile countries of the South, has adopted the Mahommedan religion, and become, in a great measure, settled. Of the Calmucks, many thousand families or "kettles" have been induced to acknowledge the authority of the Russian Government, and to confine their rambles to the plains of the Wolga ; but the greater number still remain faithful to the religion and the mode of life followed by their forefathers for hundreds of years. They may be regarded as entirely independent ; for though the Russian empire has a voice in the appointment of their princes, it not only exacts no tribute from them, but pays them a pension, on consideration of their refraining from their predatory expeditions. Their constant migrations, however, which take place mostly every four or five days, the care of their numerous flocks and herds (of which a single rich man will sometimes own as many as twenty thousand sheep, besides hundreds of camels and horses), to say nothing of the time taken up by prayers and religious ceremonies, and by smoking, leave them probably but little leisure for less honest pursuits.

The great charm of the contemplation of the life of these Nomadic races is, that it transports the imagina-

tion back to those early patriarchal times, when a few wandering tribes, perhaps, constituted nearly the whole human race ; when " the world's grey fathers " went forth in search of fresh fields and pastures new ; and Abraham, " rich in cattle, and silver and gold, went on his journeys from the south to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, and Lot also went with him, and had flocks, and herds and tents."

The migration of those far off ages must have presented, as nearly as possible, the same picture that may be seen at the present day on the Steppes of Tartary. The collecting the cattle, the stir and movement throughout the camp, the taking down the tents, and packing them and the household utensils on the backs of camels—all the arrangements must have been essentially the same, and the daily life of the people was probably little different.

A man of ordinary rank among the Tartars,—one of the " black people," as the lower classes are called,—hastens with break of day to the pastures where his cattle are feeding, to lead them, often a considerable distance, to the watering-place, his wife having, if possible, got there before him, to dip for a pail or two before the beasts have troubled the water, which is always bad enough at best. The children now get up, and wrapping themselves up in their little ragged sheepskins, go out on the Steppe to collect fuel,—grass, reeds, or dung. When the parents return, fire

is made, and the frugal meal prepared ; and sometimes, when the father has been out in the night watching the cattle, he indulges in a little brandy. After breakfast, the little boys tumble about naked on the grass ; the girls assist their mother in sewing or preparing skins, or in some of her other employments ; while the father sets to work to make wooden spoons or troughs, or to mend his saddle. In the warmest part of the afternoon, the family generally lie down to sleep ; and in the evening again the cattle must be taken to drink ; and when the rays of the setting sun are falling across the wide grassy slopes, the groups of Tartars, with their cows, sheep, and horses, are all in motion again to seek the water.

A Calmuck of the higher classes, or a Prince, as soon as he has smoked his morning pipe and drunk his tea, leaves his tent for another, which is set apart for business. Here he is occupied the greater part of the day in settling disputes and arranging various affairs, and in going through his devotional exercises with the rosary, which is used by all the Mongol tribes, and is sometimes made of amber and other costly materials. Now and then he takes a few turns with the praying wheel before described. The ladies, in the meanwhile, are occupied with their children, or in what constitutes the chief employment of women of rank in many countries,—paying visits, which being burdened with an infinite number of small ceremonies, kill as

much time, and appear just as tiresome and stupid to strangers, as an English party probably would to a Calmuck.

The summer evenings are mostly spent by all classes in the open air, and nowhere is a summer evening productive of more exquisite enjoyment. The air is often deliciously cool and pure after the hottest day; and people of all ranks come forth from their tents to enjoy it, either lying on carpets of felt spread before them, or strolling about among the flocks. Various games and diversions are going on among different classes of people, and the whole scene is one of pleasure and animation.

A lively idea may be formed of some features of Tartar life from the letters of a traveller,* who spent some time on the Steppes of Asia, and who seems to have been so fascinated by its wild freedom, as to have had half a mind to take up his abode with these roving nations. He set out for the Steppes from the Russian town of Sarepta, near the mouth of the Wolga; and after passing some ravines filled with oak, wild apple, and other trees, entered on the immeasurable sea of grass, joined company with some Calmuck Tartars, and set off in search of a party of their countrymen.

“We flew swiftly along on our excellent horses,

* Bergmann's “*Streifereyen unter den Mongolischen Horden.*”

and soon reached the spot where we expected to find the party ; but not a trace of them was to be seen. A few miles further, however, brought us up with them, and we found ourselves hospitably received. A tent was pitched for us on the fresh grass, a sheep killed, and some felt carpets spread out for our night's repose. On the following morning, when we took leave of our host, he appeared as well pleased with his guests, as if our visit had been a source of profit, instead of his being the poorer for it by the value of a sheep. The morning was cool and pleasant, but no object met our eyes that we had not seen the day before ; the grass was still green and high, but the butterflies that had been at first numerous and beautiful, grew continually scarcer.

“ Towards noon we halted ; the Calmucks dug a hole in the ground, made a fire in it with some dry dung which they collected, and put on our kettle ; but the rain-water, which they fetched from a pond or tank, was of a black yellow color, and full of insects. The only answer which my grumblings on the subject received, however, was an assurance that I might think myself lucky if I got water even as good as this in future. We had lain down for half an hour with our saddle-bags under our heads, but the heat of the sun was so insupportable, that we felt more weary after this rest than after our six hours' ride. We set off again, therefore, at full gallop ; and by the time we

had gone five and twenty miles, the two foremost of our party were out of sight, and I had some difficulty in coming up with the two others, who had placed themselves both on one horse, in order to relieve the one that appeared most exhausted. They exhorted me to make haste, unless I had a mind to pass the night on the open steppe without food or shelter ; and as this was no very pleasant prospect, I urged on my poor weary steed, and soon left behind me the one that carried double. The Calmucks bawled after me that I should not be able to overtake the foremost, and that I should lose myself. I was obstinate enough, however, to pay no attention to their advice, but continued my course in the direction which I thought the right one, being guided only by the sun. But my eyes were too little accustomed to estimate distances in these measureless steppes, and I had soon not the slightest idea in what direction I was going. The sun, my only guide, was sinking lower and lower in the heavens, but I was in no mood to enjoy the magnificent spectacle of his setting, which at another time would have filled me with rapture. A number of stories crowded into my mind, of unfortunate persons who had lost their way, and perished in this pathless wilderness ; and I was tormented by intolerable thirst, so that my tongue seemed to cling to the roof of my mouth. By the time the sun had fairly set, as I found myself near a ravine, I resolved to make the best of it, and pass the night there. I dismounted,

therefore, and having tethered my horse, climbed up the opposite side to look about me. After lingering there about an hour, I saw, with inexpressible joy, something moving a long way off; and this something proved, indeed, to be my two Calmucks, who had distinguished me at an almost incredible distance, and had come out of their way to seek me. Soon also, dark as it was growing, their wonderful eyes could perceive at a distance of several miles, the laden camels which served to guide us to the tents.

“I was kindly entertained by a Calmuck priest,—the bowl of mare’s milk handed round, and the kettle put on for tea. My host was one of a class of priests much despised, on account of their being married; and as he was poor, his family was crowded together in a small tent, which, it must be confessed, was so exceedingly filthy that the fear of vermin induced me to prefer sleeping outside on the grass, with my saddle for a pillow, and no other covering than a felt cloak. The nights here are excessively cold; and this time there was a disagreeable fog, which did not, indeed, disturb my rest, but made my hair and my clothes wet through. I awoke early, and wishing for some refreshment, was told I could have either milk or cream. I chose the latter; whereupon my hostess, seizing a very dirty dish, swept her fingers round it to clean it, and then filled it with her hand, licking off it at the same time what appeared superfluous.

* * * * *

“The horde of Tartars amongst which I found myself is one of the principal; not so much on account of its numbers, as because the chief priest of all the Calmuck disciples of the Dalai Lama had taken up his abode among them. The Vice-Khan, or Prince, was a fine-looking man, about forty years of age, dressed, when we were introduced to him, in a blue silk robe, and holding in his hand a rosary, such as are used by all the followers of Buddha. I was presented to him as a stranger, who wished to make himself acquainted with the Calmuck tongue; for which intention I was of course honored with his Highness’s approbation, and his advice not to fail, in that case, to eat plenty of the Calmuck food; as it is a common notion among them that the acquirement of their language is much facilitated by this means. He inquired whether I could drink Calmuck tea, and, on my answering in the affirmative, it was brought in a large wooden vessel with brass hoops, and poured out into wooden bowls.

“We found that the tent we had entered was only used as a Judgment Hall, and we were soon invited to enter a more spacious one, which was the residence of the Vice-Khan. On the left of the entrance stood an altar table, on which were placed many sacrificial vessels, and by the side of it hung several images of gods. Here we found the Princess, seated on a pile

of cushions, and playing with her children, of whom she had many, though she still looked fresh and well.

“After the heat of the day was over, the evening was spent in witnessing the performances of some Calmuck wrestlers, before the tents of the young princes, who, though they appeared busy all the while with their prayers and their rosaries, did not fail to mark every movement of the players, and signify their approbation or disapprobation accordingly.

“The evenings are only pleasantly cool, but after midnight a degree of cold comes on that makes furs at all seasons desirable. The stillness of the night was sadly invaded by the crash and clang of the various musical instruments from the tents of the lamas, as well as by the cries of the camels, the neighing of horses, the lowing of cattle, and the loud croaking of frogs in a neighboring pond ; so that I could not sleep till the mid hour of the night had passed.

“I was awakened by the daylight piercing through the numerous holes in the covering of my tent; and towards nine o'clock I went to the tent of the Tartar Prince, whom I found engaged with his family in prayer. The prayer seemed to consist of invocations of the gods,—mostly of the infernal ones ; for it is a characteristic of polytheism, that it brings with it more fear of the evil than love of the good deities, who are supposed to be far less active in kindness than the former in mischief.

“After the prayers we were entertained with tea, and then the Vice-Khan rose to go to his judgment tent, whither we followed him. He is assisted in his judicial duties by a sort of council of eight members, who, however, merely give him the benefit of their opinion, and put no sort of restraint upon his will.

“At the time of my arrival, it happened to be the period of a Buddhist festival of fifteen days,—the latter days of April and the first of May; and the sound of loud instrumental music was heard continually from the tents of the lamas, accompanied occasionally by a vocal performance, and by the very frequent ring of a bell. Of the instruments, there were some resembling drums, others trumpets, and others cymbals; and during this festival time, they were going the whole day, from morning till night, till I was fairly deafened; and however tolerant I might feel towards their religion, I could not resist the conviction, that their music was an invention of the devil.

“In the interval of the service, sour milk was handed round; and during one of these I obtained leave to enter and examine the interior of the tent, at the door of which only I had hitherto stood. Opposite to the entrance was a lofty altar,—a wooden scaffolding, hung with colored silk, and above it a canopy, on which was represented a figure of the heavenly dragon who produces thunder and lightning. Upon the altar stood several bronze figures in silken robes;

and on a projection beneath, dishes filled with corn, beans, rice, and other things, likewise offered as sacrifice by the Indian Brahmins. Near them stood a vessel of holy water, out of which rose several peacock's feathers, and beneath it a looking-glass, though for what purpose I could not discover.

"Suddenly, when I had nearly finished my examination, the blast of a cow's horn without gave a signal for the renewal of prayers and the recommencement of the service. The priests came pouring again into the temple, and I made my exit. Outside I found several of the higher order standing, wrapped in red mantles, with something like helmets on their heads, from which a large bunch of yellow wool hung down the back. Some of the inferior dignity were engaged in exercising their lungs through horns, and making the noise which we had heard. At some distance an immense kettle was suspended over a fire, maintained by a mountain of dung, and whole sheep and even cows were boiling, in preparation for the banquet. Near the fire stood a cook, black as Erebus, and naked to the waist, with a huge ladle in his hand, with which he was stirring up the contents of the cauldron. Not far off, I observed in an open tent a crowd of boys, who assist the priests in the religious service; some were eating, with no deficiency of appetite, large lumps of boiled meat given to them, and others appeared to await with eagerness their turn to share in the enter-

tainment. I approached to take a nearer view, but was compelled to retire again, lest in the hurry of those who were running about with the dishes, I should receive a shower-bath of scalding hot soup. Two ceremonies were to take place to-day,—the appointment of fifteen new priests, and the reception of the patriarch, Great Lama, of the horde. Of the new candidates for the priestly office, I had the night before observed eight walking, as it is their business to do, round and round the ecclesiastical quarter, barefoot and silent, with an earnest and solemn expression of face. Their heads were shaven, and they wore, over the usual red frock, a robe of yellow silk, which descended from the neck to the ankle, concealing the left arm, while the right was occupied in moving rapidly along the beads of a rosary. These rosaries are in use among all the Mongolian nations, and consist of a hundred and eight beads, made of plum-stones, and to these, at certain distances, other smaller ones are attached, to assist the reckoning, as they are used for arithmetical as well as for religious purposes.

“The tent intended for the Chief Lama had been pitched at some distance off, at the other side of a small river, across which his holiness had to be carried. He also wore a yellow silk dress,—as yellow is a very favorite color among the Mongols; and his cap, instead of the customary fox skin, was trimmed with rich sable. He was mounted on a horse, which one

of the ordinary lamas led by the bridle ; whilst another carried before him a staff of ebony. He stopped at a hut, before the entrance of which two flags were planted, and entering through a smaller open tent, which formed a kind of antechamber to it, prostrated himself three times before the altar within, but came back in a few minutes, and seated himself on a pile of cushions placed for him in the outer tent. He then put off his red boots and his upper robe, and the clergy approached one after another to do him homage. The common people, also, pressed as near as they could, but were prevented from approaching too closely by the vigorous use of the sticks of the ecclesiastics. After some time had elapsed, the Vice-Khan made his appearance in a blue silk dress, glittering all over with gold and silver, and after him his sons, the Princess, and her daughters ; they all threw themselves on the ground before the Chief Lama, who merely returned their salutation by waving his hand. After this *levée* there was a solemn prayer ; in the midst of which dishes of milk, tea, and boiled meat, were handed round,—the common people all the while prostrating themselves, with their foreheads touching the earth, or at least their caps, which they seemed to throw down before them on purpose.

“The conclusion of the ceremony was announced by the images being taken from the altars, the hangings rolled up, and the priests pouring holy water over

the hands of the worshippers, who received it into the hollow palm, swallowed a part, and washed their faces with the rest. The water is mixed with saffron and sugar, and every Calmuck who receives it, pays in return the value of a small copper coin. Towards evening I visited the market, whither the festival had attracted a number of Russian and Armenian traders. There were about fifty open tents or booths; the wares were spread on the ground, and all around were Calmuck purchasers, kneeling down and closely examining their quality. I inquired of the merchants whether they were often robbed, and I was told in reply, that they did not recollect that a theft had happened for years past, although only a single watchman is left at night to guard all the tents, and, of course, nothing can be easier than to obtain an entrance into them."

On his second visit to the Tartars, Mr. Bergmann had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with one of the less agreeable circumstances of Nomadic life,—a march in wet weather. He had returned for a short time to Russia, but felt irresistibly attracted to return to the Steppes :—

"In Sarepta I could neither eat nor sleep; but I no sooner found myself once more upon my couch of felt than all was well again; and I rejoiced when, with the dawning light, the great kettle was put on for a Calmuck tea. I know not whether it is the purity of the

air, or something in this Nomadic sort of life, that agrees so well with me.

“I found the horde just on the point of breaking up their encampment to seek fresh pastures; and since my arrival had been unexpected, a camel and a horse had to be got ready for me. Troops of horses, cattle, and camels, were in motion from every quarter; the tent of the Prince was being taken to pieces, and he was seated with his wife before the skeleton of his palace, when I approached and made my proper Calmuck salutations, and presented to the Princess a small barrel of grapes.

“We travelled this day a distance of more than seventeen miles in about seven hours,—a slowness of progress which must be attributed to the pace of the loaded camels. It is of no use to attempt to ride before them, since one would have, after all, to wait till they came up, and might run the risk of losing them.

As soon as we arrived at our new resting place, our tent was pitched, the kettle put on, and in half an hour the meal was ready. I then went to the Charuk, or prayer tent, to seek out some of my old acquaintance, and on my way I was struck by the sight of a *Burchan*, just set up. Three poles, tied together at the top, and spread out widely at the bottom, with a piece of felt thrown over them, formed a kind of small tent, in the entrance of which was placed the idol. I had often noticed those burchans before, and knew

that they were set up for the ceremonial of an oath. As I had never witnessed it, I resolved to do so this time ; and after I had been riding slowly up and down for an hour, a crowd of priests approached, and seated themselves in two rows, extending from the entrance of the tent, having first kindled a fire at a little distance. Accuser and accused then advanced, followed by a considerable number of their respective friends, and disputing all the way along, and even for some time after they had reached the sacred spot.

“ At length one of the parties, with a very voluble speech, of which I understood little, prostrated himself three times on the earth, and then advancing, touched the image with his forehead. This was all ; the idol was now taken away, and the assembly dispersed. I was told the quarrel had been merely about a few rubles.

“ The following morning it was intended we should continue our wanderings, but the rain poured in such torrents, that it seemed unadvisable to keep to this plan. A weather prophet was called in, who gave it as his opinion that it would clear up ; and it was resolved, in consequence, that we should proceed. Horses and cattle were put in motion, and we set off, but made very little progress indeed ; and as the rain continued unceasingly the whole day, I could not help in my heart many times cursing the prophet. The poor little children were, however, the most to be

pitied ; for they were packed in the customary manner, in boxes, placed upon the backs of the camels, and so tightly wedged in, that they could hardly move hand or foot. Many had forced out their heads from beneath their felt coverings, and were often all bleeding, from the friction of the wood-works and cords that confined them."

It is not, however, the rainy weather only that is productive of annoyance to this migratory people. The summer is often a season of much more severe suffering. Although the dews are heavy, the almost total absence of shade leaves the country exposed to the unmitigated scorching of the fiercest rays of the sun, which rises and sets like a great globe of fire. In the hot season, the surface of the ground becomes browner and browner, till it is sometimes at last perfectly black. Men and cattle assume a lean and haggard look ; their tanned skin hangs in wrinkled folds ; the ponds and many of the wells dry up ; the lakes become mere sandy hollows ; and guards have to be set over such springs as remain, lest they should be drunk up ; not a breath of air is stirring ; and the least movement, even of a bird, raises a choking cloud of black dust. At this season, a horde is seldom able to proceed as much as ten miles in a day ; and in winter their march is often obstructed by heavy falls of snow, so that their longest journeys are often made in spring and autumn, the seasons when rain is most frequent.

When the weather is quite fine, the migration has the appearance of a festival ; the air resounds with the neighing of horses, the bellowing of oxen, and the animating cries of their leaders. The people also put on their best clothes ; but when there is fear of rain, it is not uncommon to see them riding half naked ; as a Tartar, who cannot afford many changes of clothing, would always rather ride bareheaded, or thrust his naked feet into the stirrups, than run any risk of spoiling his cap or his boots, which, on such occasions, he covers up carefully under his felt cloak. Young children are, as we have seen, usually packed into baskets, and dangled over the backs of a camel, but the sucking infants are carried before their mothers on horseback ; boys of six or seven years, and old women of eighty, are often able to ride their fifteen miles without stopping.

The favorite diversion of these wandering Tartar tribes is precisely that of many of our highest aristocracy, and their imitators in various classes, namely, horse-racing ; with the difference only, that the Tartar pursues it in a more gentlemanly spirit, that is, invariably for the sake of the amusement and the honor only, whilst the English nobleman who " goes on the turf," does so often enough with a view to pecuniary profit ; thus turning it into a trade, and not always a very honest one. Among the Tartars, the winning horse belongs by " right divine " to the Prince, and the

owner receives only a robe of honor, for the value of the horse and the victory together.

The run is generally as much as fifteen or twenty miles ; and with the first glimmer of morning light, the Prince and the other spectators take their places near the appointed goal,—two or three tents being pitched, if possible, on an eminence commanding a view over a considerable extent of country. The approach of the horses can be perceived from a great distance, by the clouds of dust and the clamor and confused cries of the men, and the crowd surrounding them. As many as five hundred horses are sometimes entered for the race ; and as soon as the foremost comes in sight, the spectators gallop off to join them, and accompany them in grand triumph to the goal. The victory is afterwards celebrated by a banquet, and the wooden bowls passed freely round in honor of their exploits ; for which honor, as in other cases, it sometimes happens the victors pay the forfeit of their lives.

The Tartars have also other social diversions,—dancing, games of various kinds, and grand drinking bouts ; at which, however, it does not appear that any disorder takes place, though immense numbers of people are assembled. Each brings with him his contribution of brandy and kumys, and the meeting is held under the open sky ; the girls sing songs, and, at a given signal, every one must drain his bowl.

In the long winter evenings, also, the interior of a Calmuck tent is often enlivened, especially among the rich, by the performance of singers, dancers, and the tellers of stories ; and the young girls amuse themselves with ingenious works, or, if they are ladies of rank, with a favorite game, which consists principally in pitching little balls of bread into the mouths of their servants, who stand holding them wide open on purpose, and are very skilful at catching what is thrown. The winter evenings are also often chosen by the young men for hunting parties, to pursue the boar and other wild animals of the Steppe.

The Buddhist religion has introduced among the Mongol races more of what may be called literary culture, than might have been expected in their stage of civilisation. The knowledge of the arts of reading and writing is very generally diffused among them, as the lamas are very diligent in giving instruction ; they have two kinds of writing, one used only for the sacred books, and another in which their more limited stock of profane literature, the traditions of heroes and great leaders of their race, are preserved. They have also poems of a pathetic character : such as, the lamentation of a young wife for the absence of her husband ; of a horde obliged to quit a favorite territory ; or of a girl mourning for the loss of her lover ; as well as others of a more animated and inspiring strain. Of these, some of the most celebrated are the songs of

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Jangar, and his twelve heroes, a number that may remind the reader of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. The poet who composed these songs was at all events a very wonderful personage ; for it is a notorious fact, or at least every Calmuck knows, that after lying three days and three nights buried on the Steppe, and when the dogs had begun to gnaw his bones, he got up again, and returned to his tent, where he began to sing at such a rate as no poet before or since ever did, for three days and three nights, without stopping, and got through three hundred and sixty songs—somewhat too much, perhaps, of a good thing.

PASTORAL AND AGRICULTURAL

LIFE IN AFRICA.

Among inhabitants of the same or similar countries, the life of the settled cultivator of the ground always implies a higher degree of civilisation than that of the Nomadic herdsman ; as on Cæsar's first visit to Britain he found the inhabitants of the southern parts of the island, who possessed corn-fields, in a much more advanced state than those of the middle and northern districts, who still lived on the milk and flesh of their flocks and herds. But in tropical countries, where the quickness and luxuriance of vegetation is so great, that plants may almost be seen to grow, so little skill or industry is requisite to enable man to live by the cultivation of the soil, that it forms the easiest transition from the life of the mere hunter or fruit eater, which was everywhere the first state. The agricultural nations of Western Africa and Nigritia are by no means in a higher state of civilisation than the pastoral races who roam over the great table land of Central

Asia, or than the wandering Tuaricks and Tibboos of the great African Desert.

The term *savage*, which we use to express the earliest condition of the human race, is liable to some objection; as from the other sense in which the same word is used, it always seems to imply some fierceness of character, and not merely a state of simplicity and ignorance; so that it sounds like a contradiction to say, that a mild and inoffensive race, such, for instance, as many who inhabit islands on the Pacific, is a race of savages, and that a fierce and cruel people, like the Ashantees, is not so; yet this is unavoidable, for we use the term not to describe the moral character of a people, but their want of culture. The old-fashioned phrase of "wild man" would be, perhaps, preferable.

As a general rule, however, an improved character does accompany an increase of knowledge; and where this is not the case, we shall always find that some adverse circumstance has interfered with the natural progress of improvement. The ferocity and general degradation of character among the natives of the maritime countries of Western Africa, would be extremely perplexing, were not the mystery explained by its being the great seat of the slave trade, and of all the vice, misery, and degradation, which it brings with it.

"Throughout Negroland," says Dr. Prichard, in his valuable work on the "Natural History of Man," "and

especially in this part of it, the inhabitants of one district, the dwellers on one mountain, are ever on the watch to seize the wives and children of neighboring clans, and sell them to strangers ; many sell their own. Every recess, and almost every retired corner of the land, has been the scene of this hateful traffic and of slaughter, not to be excused or palliated by the spirit of warfare, but perpetrated in cold blood, and for the love of gain."

Southern Africa, at the time of its discovery by Europeans, was occupied by a people in exactly the same condition as the Mongol races of Central Asia. They were divided into many tribes, under the patriarchal government of chiefs or elders ; they wandered about with numerous flocks and herds, and inhabited moveable villages of huts, constructed of poles, or boughs, covered with rush mats, which could be taken down and carried by pack oxen. The Bushmen, the descendants of these people, in consequence of the wars with Europeans, and the cruel treatment they have experienced from the past colonists, have fallen from the pastoral state back to that of hunters, and, indeed, of robbers, for a part of their subsistence is derived from plunder. From peaceful shepherds and herdsmen they have become predatory savages ; and that their present miserable and degraded condition is the consequence of these unfortunate circumstances, and not of any natural deficiency, is evident, since

those who have been converted to Christianity, and made the objects of benevolent care, have exhibited as much, or perhaps more than any other people, its happy influence both in their moral character, and in the increased prosperity of their outward condition.

The Gallas are a wild race of wandering herdsmen, inhabiting vast plains south of Abyssinia, spreading to a considerable extent towards the unknown regions of the interior. Their numbers have of late increased so much, that they are regarded as very formidable to Abyssinia, which they seem likely to overrun. They are divided, as people in this stage usually are, into tribes, independent of each other, and, in some particulars, resemble the Caffres, another half Nomadic and warlike race, inhabiting South-Eastern Africa; a people in many respects far above the merely savage state. Besides their flocks and herds, they have a knowledge of the rudiments of many arts, practise agriculture, know the use of iron and copper, and manufacture from these metals many articles of use and ornament. They also make articles of earthenware from sand and clay, and, in their fields and gardens, grow maize, millet, beans, and water-melons. They are among the handsomest nations of this continent, being tall, strongly made, finely proportioned, and with the high forehead and prominent nose of the Europeans. The Bechuanas are of the same family as the Caffres, and even superior in many points of civilisation. In the

country of one tribe the missionary Mr. Campbell, who penetrated farther into the country in this direction than any other traveller, saw fields of corn several hundred acres in extent, and a town of several thousand inhabitants. A hundred and sixty miles north-east of these, he found a still larger city of a people called the Murutsi, who build their houses with masonry, and ornament them with pillars and mouldings, and manufacture knives and razors of a kind of steel. Beyond these, again, in the same direction, he heard of a people of whom it was said that "they wear clothes, ride on elephants, climb into their houses, and *are gods*,"—an expression denoting at least the speaker's notion of their superiority to the natives with whom he was acquainted. At the time when the Portuguese first settled in Africa, much was said of fierce Nomadic races, called Jagas, who inhabited the high plains eastward of Loanga and Congo ; but little is known of these people.

The immense desert which stretches its vast and barren expanse from the Atlantic Ocean to the confines of Egypt, is inhabited by many wandering tribes, some of foreign descent, others of ancient African race, subsisting partly on the produce of their sheep, goats, and camels, but more by plunder and by the sale of slaves, whom they seize and carry off from the natives of the interior. Of these tribes, one of the most remarkable is that of the Tuaricks, a very handsome

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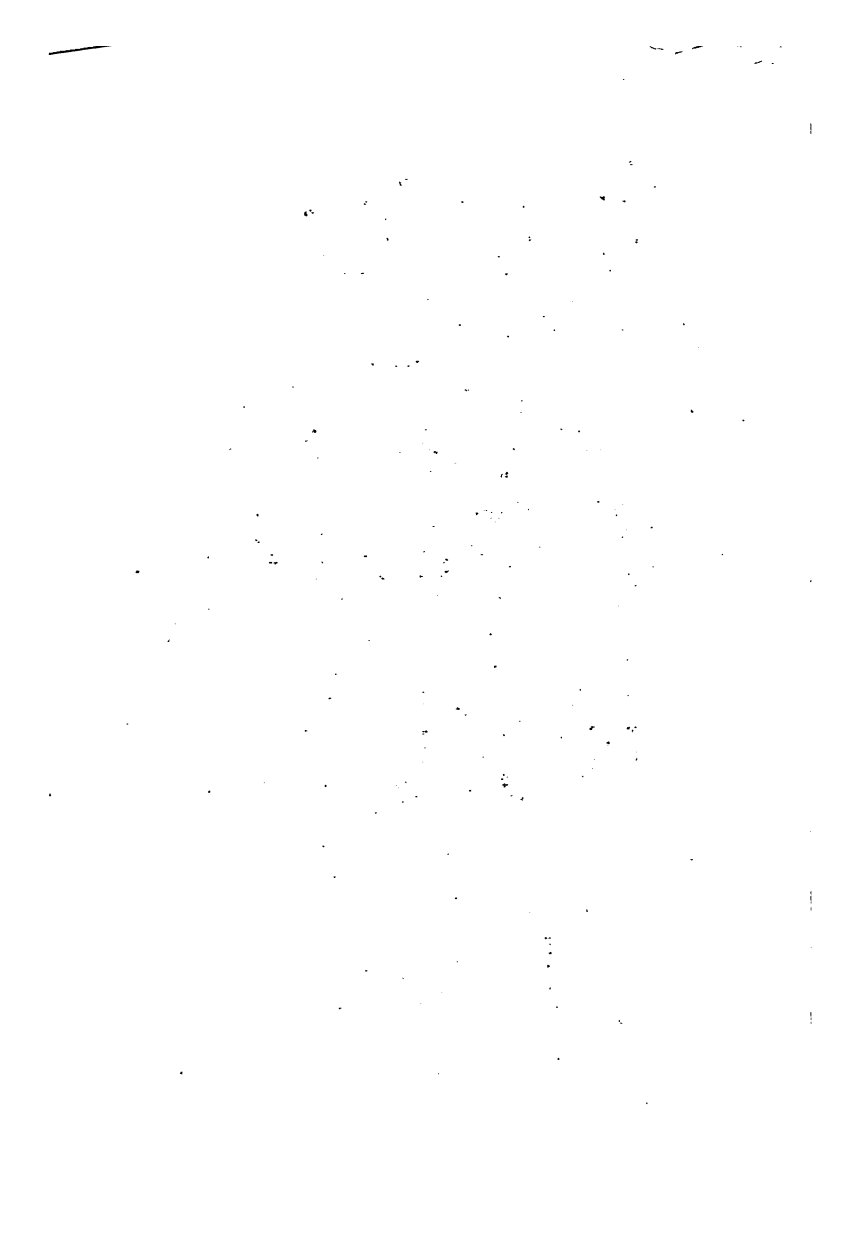


A PARTY OF TAURICKS ON THEIR MARCHES.

are well known to the public and the press. The fact that the government has been able to keep the public from knowing the truth about the situation in the United States is a great failure. The government has been able to keep the public from knowing the truth about the situation in the United States is a great failure. The government has been able to keep the public from knowing the truth about the situation in the United States is a great failure.

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race, with an air of lofty independence in their manners, and a dashing military bearing that is very imposing. They are said to belong to the great original Lybian family, of which the warlike Kabyls of the Atlas mountains are also a branch. They have no resemblance to the negro, not even the black skin ; for though their complexions are embrowned by the burning sun, the parts of their skin which are constantly covered, are as white as those of most Europeans ; and their appearance is extremely striking and picturesque, as they come galloping along in their showy dresses on their swift, tall camels, called Maherries, which they manage with great dexterity, firing while mounted, and hitting their mark whilst going at full speed. They wear a loose shirt or frock of blue, or blue and white cotton, or sometimes of bright scarlet or striped silk, confined by a broad belt, full striped cotton trowsers, turbans of various gaudy colors, and sandals of black leather with scarlet thongs, elegantly embroidered ; but the most peculiar feature of their costume is a blue or white cloth, passed over the face, and covering it closely up as high as the eyes. Their original inducement to this singular custom they appear to have forgotten, but say it must be right, as it was the fashion of their forefathers. They are fully armed,—having straight, long swords, daggers suspended to their wrists, light spears, about six feet long, made sometimes of iron, inlaid with brass, and some-

times of wood, but always highly ornamented. Besides these, they have stronger and heavier spears fastened behind their saddles, and usually a long gun, which is very effective in their hands. Round their necks, arms, and legs, across the breast, in fact, wherever they can find room for them, the Tuaricks wear an almost countless number of charms; their spears and guns even have their share, and in the very folds of their turbans scraps of holy writings are concealed. They speak the Berber,—a very ancient African language—and are conscious and proud of its antiquity, declaring that Noah spoke it in preference to any other. Although very bold and warlike, it does not appear that they are unnecessarily cruel, and they never show to any one anything like servility. They will not kiss the hand of a superior, but merely advance and shake it, and then retire a few steps, looking him full in the face.

Of what might be called their domestic habits little or nothing is known, as they are only met with occasionally in crossing the Great Desert, or seen in small parties at fairs or markets of Bornou and Fezzan; but from their general intelligence and their aptitude for trade, and freedom from any degrading vice, it is probable, that should any European nation ever open an extensive intercourse with the interior of Africa, they might become highly civilized.

Another wandering race, which divides with that of

the Tuaricks the empire of the vast desert, and like them levies contributions on passing caravans, is that of the Tibboo, also a handsome people, and totally unlike the negro, in all but the color of the skin. The women are often quite beautiful, unless we should think their bright black complexions deprived them of any claim to the epithet. They are mostly prettily attired in colored shawls, arranged with taste and some regard to decorum, yet showing to advantage their exquisitely moulded figures. Their long, black, plaited tresses, and jetty skins, are adorned with red coral, their delicate waists and ankles glitter with silver ornaments, and they have generally an appearance of playfulness and vivacity, that speaks favorably for their condition. They subsist partly on the produce of their flocks, as well as on dates and a little corn, but make no scruple to plunder whenever they can find an opportunity, and, like all the nations of Northern Africa, traffic with slaves. We need no other explanation of the general barbarism of this country than the prevalence of this practice.

Nomadic tribes of Arabs are also found in the northern parts of the Desert, whose manner of life is that of all people similarly circumstanced. They remove their tents wherever pasturage, or any other inducement, may offer itself. Their camels are laden with the tents, cooking utensils, and women and children : and the men walk before, driving the flocks, or

sometimes ride on horseback, without bridle or saddle. At night the flocks are guarded by fierce dogs, almost like wolves, though of a whitish color, who howl rather than bark whenever a stranger approaches. Whenever it is possible, the tents are pitched in the neighborhood of a well ; but these are so few and far between in the Sahara, that a week often elapses without the sheep being allowed to drink. When they find a spot of ground capable of cultivation, the Arabs sow on it a scanty stock of corn, after turning up the ground with a hoe, and these spots are usually respected, it is said, by other wanderers ; but should the Arabs happen to be at war with the Bashaw of Tripoli, he is sure to destroy their crops, and to avoid this, they often gather them in when the corn is not nearly ripe, and consequently will not serve for seed for the following year. When the date season begins, they come and pitch their tents near Tripoli, where they can purchase this fruit, as it forms an important article of subsistence, and they also use the milk of the camels and sheep, and make butter and cheese much in the same manner as the Mongols.

From the wool of their sheep the women manufacture strong shawl-like wrappers, carpets, shirts, turbans, and articles of ornament ; and the wool and hair of their sheep and goats are also made into tents and sacks to carry their corn and merchandise. The looms of the Arab women stand on the ground, and

they have no shuttles, but pass the thread through their fingers in a very laborious manner ; so that what with cooking and other employments, they have not much idle time on their hands ; but the men do scarcely any work inside the tent, and appear not always free from ennui,—the torment generally of more civilized communities.

Central Africa is traversed across its whole breadth by a chain of mountains, called, generally, the Mountains of the Moon, of which the western part, the chain of Kong, is rather a plateau, or high table land, than a chain of hills, presenting three lofty fronts towards the sea, and consisting of terraces or mountainous uplands.

The country along the sea-coast is low and flat, so that for hundreds of leagues the tops of the trees give it the appearance of an immense forest growing in the water ; but on advancing further up the rivers, its general appearance is uncommonly beautiful and attractive : it is covered with stately and umbrageous trees ; the rugged appearance of the mountains is softened by the lively verdure with which they are clothed, and their majestic irregular forms, and the huge masses of light and shade projected from their sides, give it a grand and picturesque aspect.

The forests are dense and magnificent, and almost impenetrable from the exuberant growth of gigantic creepers, which chain tree to tree, and frequently ren-

der it necessary to cut a passage through them with a hatchet. The matted mass of foliage in many parts permits no ray of sunshine to pierce the awful gloom, which the imagination of the negroes peoples with evil spirits; and a deathlike stillness reigns, broken only from time to time by a sudden flight of parrots or other gregarious birds. Sometimes a partial opening will admit a sudden blaze of light from the vertical sun, and dazzle the eye with the brilliant hues that it calls forth, heightening by contrast the horror of the dark and pathless woods, as the traveller plunges into their recesses.

The paths through these forests to the native settlements are purposely made as intricate as possible, and they are often flooded by water that has accumulated in the hollows and slopes, or crossed by monstrous trees which have fallen to the earth in a state of decay, exhibiting every stage of decomposition. Sometimes the feet sink deep in masses of rotten wood dust, and often they are pierced with sharp pointed thorns of a fearful growth. Howlings and fetid effluvia give frequent indications of the presence of wild beasts, even when they are not seen; and the exhalations from the swamps are of the most noxious and even fatal character. Yet even here, in the inmost recesses of these woods, the natives often choose to establish their abode,—preferring the danger of wild beasts or poisonous miasma to the neighborhood of their fellow men.

On account of the prevalence of the terrible slave-trade, security is generally the first point considered in the choice of a spot for an African village. The bank of some small river or creek, lined with thick mangroves, and therefore difficult of access, is frequently selected; but where this cannot be found, a small piece of ground is cleared in the depths of an almost impenetrable wood; and the only approach made to it is one narrow footpath, often carried in a winding direction round the place; so that a traveller passing through these vast forests might suppose himself far from any human habitation, when he was really within a few yards of a town. Such a situation is, of course, terribly unhealthy to Europeans, as the breeze which comes through the woods in the morning and evening, laden with moisture, renders them often extremely chilly, but dies away in the middle of the day, leaving them intolerably close. When any great epidemic sickness occurs among the natives, from this cause or the vicinity of swamps, they immediately attribute it to witchcraft, and, if possible, abandon their town. Often in the midst of what has seemed an untrodden wilderness travellers come upon the ruins of an African village, which has been either forsaken from this cause, or the inhabitants killed or carried off as slaves. "Our route," says a visitor to the Ashantee country,*

* Dupuis's Journal of a Residence in Ashantee.

“still lay through the forest, amidst pillars of wood of mighty dimensions, cemented together into a rich entangled web, impervious to a single ray of the noon-day sun. This grand awning was inwreathed in folds by various plants of a migratory kind, and particularly by that sort of fibrous stem which resembles cable ropes. A morass intersected the path, in which mud predominated more than water ; and beyond this, about an hour’s march, we crossed a little stream and entered Yankomady. All that now remains of this village is a few bamboo huts ; some palm and plantain trees, choked up with the rank growth of cane and jungle, were the only relics left of its plantations ; or rather, in spite of the exterminating hand of war, they had again raised their heads above the surface of utter devastation. Some spots appeared in the neighborhood, where clusters of the largest trees had been overthrown by the violence of tempests, thereby dragging in their descent a whole army of surrounding objects, or crushing into splinters those limbs that were incapable of sustaining the accumulated pressure, until a sufficient bearing was gained on the barren wrecks of many trunks. Not unfrequently these threatening avalanches were suspended in various angular positions, supported only by numerous bands and links of forest cordage, entwined in friendly embraces among the trunks.”

Now and then the scenery of the forest is enlivened

by a clear sparkling stream, over-arched by lofty trees, through whose intertwining branches the beams of the noon-day sun here and there find an entrance, and glitter with a golden effulgence on "brilliant little rocks, and shelving slabs of granite, iron stone, and mica, and mixed with pure white sand ; while parties of women and girls skip about among the rocks, and laving their limbs in the current, but for their jetty complexions, might pass for a group of Naiads."

The Ashantee country, from the latitude of about seven degrees north, has been described as one vast rampart of vegetation, down to the water's edge—extending east and west from Aguassim to Ahanta, in the form of one compact forest, intersected by the most capricious and serpentine paths.

The villages mostly consist of about forty or fifty huts, built in a circle, with a space in the middle for the *palaver house* or town hall. They are placed so close to each other that if one happens to catch fire the whole town can hardly escape being burnt ; and considering their materials, such an accident cannot be, one would suppose, very rare.

The huts are built either circular or square, and no one but the king is allowed to have more than one story. Four strong posts are sunk about a foot and a half into the ground, with smaller ones between at the distance of about two feet ; and the spaces filled up with plaited twigs. The walls are made about six feet

high, and plastered inside and out with clay, and frequently moistened to prevent their drying too quickly before the roof is put on. The roof is made of a conical form, with the branches of a species of bamboo, thatched with long grass, and, projecting a few feet beyond the wall, forms a kind of piazza which affords a shelter from the rain, as well as a pleasant lounging place for dry weather, and where the natives spend much of their time, swinging in hammocks, or reclining on mats on a bank of earth raised about a foot and a half high, and running all round the house except at the entrance. These houses have mostly two openings opposite to each other, to afford a current of air, as well as to admit light; and there is seldom any other place of exit for the smoke of the fire. A mat let down before the opening constitutes the door, and the mansion contains little more furniture than a few mats to sleep on, a chest to keep clothes in, an iron pot, a kettle for water, and a few baskets and calabashes.

The larger towns form one avenue or street, with narrow diverging paths, and very extensive plantations round them; and beyond lies the thicket, peopled with lions, panthers, hyenas, and other formidable beasts of prey.

Clearing the ground for the reception of grain is, where vegetation is so rapid and exuberant, of course the chief difficulty of the cultivator. When a suitable

spot has been selected, the natives go into the forest, just before the rainy season, and cut down the trees, the smaller to the roots, the larger some feet above the ground. They then collect the loppings into heaps, and set fire to them, when the greater part, including the stumps, are mostly consumed. The flames, indeed, spread with a rapidity that is often exceedingly dangerous to the surrounding country, and at any other season might be fatal. The torrents of rain that fall, however, soon put an end to the conflagration; and when the earth has been thoroughly soaked and manured by the scattered ashes, the people throw in their rice or other grain, but they never turn over the ground, or even give themselves the trouble to grub up the roots, or the tendrils branching from them, but scratch over a little soil, and leave the grain to its fate. The harvest is reaped four months after seed time; but long before this, numbers of old people and children are sent into the fields to drive away the rice-birds which make their appearance in swarms, as soon as the rice is in ear. The rice is cut with a common knife, and then tied into bundles and hung on the stumps of trees left standing; these bundles are afterwards laid on the ground and beaten gently with small sticks, whilst a number of men stand round and keep up a draught of air, by swinging mats backwards and forwards, to blow away the chaff. The corn is always kept whole, and pounded as it is wanted—this being

one of the daily occupations of the women, who generally use for the purpose a wooden mortar and stakes four or five feet long. The grain is sown on fresh ground every year for four or five years, after which the first is used again ; and the plantation is cultivated by all the inhabitants of a village in common, and the produce divided according to the numbers of each family. Besides this common land, however, individuals are at liberty to cultivate land for their own exclusive use, as they frequently do.

The headman, or chief of each village, claims a tribute of as much rice as will reach up to his mouth when he is standing upright ; but as he is expected to entertain all strangers who may come as friends to the village, the tribute scarcely equals the expenses of his hospitality. The European method of dividing the year into four seasons is not applicable to this part of Africa, which has but two, the rainy and the dry. The time of day is marked by pointing to the situation of the sun. To denote the time from sunset to midnight, the people say, "He is gone into the water;" meaning, of course, the waves of the Atlantic : and from midnight to morning, "He lives in the bush." The ages of children are reckoned by rice harvests. In the wet season the rain sometimes continues for thirty hours without any intermission ; but at others, for not more than twelve, being followed by an interval of clear, cool, and delightful weather. This season is usually

ushered in by tremendous tempests, called tornadoes—violent gusts of wind, attended by thunder and lightning, as well as torrents of rain. A small dark cloud is first seen on the verge of the eastern horizon, and several faint flashes of lightning in quick succession, with distant mutterings of thunder. The clouds now become more dense, appearing piled in huge masses upon each other, increasing gradually in blackness, till the whole heaven appears wrapped in the pitchy darkness of the deepest midnight, rendered visible by a lurid gleam of light in the west. Man and beast fly to the nearest shelter, and presently the thundering storm bursts with a tremendous uproar that cannot be described. Immediately after a tornado the atmosphere is often so clear that remote objects appear as if brought within half their usual distance :—

“ The groves, the mountain tops, the headland heights,
Stand all apparent,—not a vapor streaks
The boundless blue.”

Sometimes a dry parching wind prevails, which renders the weather insufferably hot, and the atmosphere so thick and hazy, that the stars, usually so brilliant, can scarcely be seen, and the sun appears only for a few hours about noon. Vegetables of every kind suffer terribly from this hot wind, tender plants are killed by it, and even the most hardy feel its baleful influence. The lemon, orange, and lime trees droop, their leaves

wither; the grass dries up like hay; even the sides and decks of ships on the coast open and become leaky, and many kinds of wood-work fly to pieces.

In the parts of the country which are free from wood, grass growing to the height of six or eight feet frequently takes fire, and the only chance which a traveller has in these cases to escape destruction is by striking a light and kindling another fire, so that by the time the flames of the first reach him, there may be a spot burnt clear, in which he may find a refuge. It was probably under this aspect that the Carthaginian traveller, Hanno, first saw this country, when he described it as "burning with fires and perfumes, the streams of fire falling into the sea. The country was impassable," he adds, "on account of its great heat, and we sailed quickly thence, being much terrified. Passing on for four or five days we discovered a country full of fire; in the middle was a lofty fire, larger than the rest, which seemed to touch the stars."*

Ashantee has now been for more than a hundred years under the dominion of personages called kings, to whose sway all lesser chiefs have been subjected. The monarch is of course despotic, although a sort of aristocracy exists, or did exist a few years ago, which exercised some control over his royal will, at all events, in questions of war. The nobles are exempt from

* Falconer's Voyage of Hanno.

capital punishment, but liable to be deprived of their property at the pleasure of the sovereign, who is, of course, by no means inclined to forget this part of his prerogative, so that the aristocracy is becoming daily more select, for few people have much ambition to enter its ranks. Beneath these there is no other distinction but that of slave and free man; unless we reckon as a separate class the *caboceers* or captains, who, besides commanding his forces in war, have the honor to execute his majesty's commands in disposing of the heads of his subjects. The rich wear a rather costly dress, or drapery of striped silk, made exactly like the ancient Roman toga; but the poor have no other clothing than a piece of cotton cloth round their loins. The war dress of the captains is very showy, with gold ornaments, a gold breastplate a cap with gold ram's horns, and an enormous plume of eagle's feathers. Sometimes a lump of rock gold is worn suspended to the wrist; for in no other country in the world—not even in South America—is gold so plentiful as in Ashantee. It is procured partly by washing the sands in the beds of the rivers and torrents, partly from mines and pits in the mountains; and lumps of clay or rock, containing a pound or a pound and a half of the pure metal, are often brought to market. The *washings of the market-place* belong to the king, as well as in some districts the exclusive right to the washings of the sands and the produce of some of the

mines. His revenue is also increased by a tax on all the slaves bought to be sent to the coast, as well as by the little perquisites obtained by the plunder of his subjects, and, lastly, by his being the heir to all the gold belonging to deceased persons. Some of the richest of the gold mines have, it is said, never been worked, as they are considered sacred to the gods.

The natives of Ashantee have made greater progress in arts and manufactures than might have been expected of a people whose manners are still so rude and ferocious. Nearly all the weapons and ornaments they use are manufactured by native smiths and goldsmiths; and their weavers and dyers, it is said, produce cloths of such fineness, variety, and brilliancy, that they would do no discredit to an English loom. Others exhibit their dexterity in a less creditable manner, by adulterating the gold of their country in a manner that could hardly be excelled by a first-rate chemist, and by practising similar frauds. The Ashantees also carry on a rather extensive trade with the countries of the interior, as well as contrive to elude the watchfulness of the British ships cruising off the coast, and export numbers of their unfortunate fellow countrymen as slaves.

It would be a task too painful and disgusting, to enter into a detail of the brutal excesses and terrible cruelties common among the Ashantees, and which we cannot but think would never have arisen among any

people who had always been in peaceable occupation of their country ; but are to be regarded as the terrible result of the long ages of war, violence, and slavery, from which they as well as other African races have suffered. They appear to have been originally driven from some country further north, by the swords of the foreign nations who poured into it about the time of the great Mahommedan conquests, and to have been thus early initiated into cruelty and bloodshed by a people in a higher state of advancement than themselves.

Nothing can well exceed their ferocious disregard of human life. Every festival is celebrated by the slaughter of hundreds of human victims. One person at least must be murdered at the funeral of every free man, to "wet the grave," as it is called ; at the death of a chief his attendants, to the number of some hundreds, male and female, are massacred. On all grand occasions, the golden ornaments and showy silken robes of the king and his chiefs are stained and smeared with human blood recently shed. "The city," says Mr. Dupuis, who was sent on an embassy to the barbarian monarch from the British Government, "exhibited at the time of a religious festival, the most deplorable solitude ; and the few human beings who were courageous enough to show themselves in the streets, fled at the approach of one of the king's officers, and barricaded the doors of their huts, to

escape the danger of being shot or sacrificed. The doleful cries of the women vibrated from several quarters of the city, and the death horns and drums within the palace seemed to stupify the obnoxious prisoners and foreign slaves with horror, as they contemplated the risk they were exposed to. I wandered about during this awful day, until fatigue and disgust led me to seek my quarters. The Fantees now did not venture to stir abroad, and my Moslem acquaintance kept within the house to avoid the sight of the butcheries. Oppressed with bodily and mental fatigue, I mounted my horse and rode into the forest; but the business of the day was not over when I returned. In the palace only, besides those who were sacrificed in private houses and in the forest, seventy persons were put to death, and the following day a similar train of horrors succeeded."

It is scarcely necessary to add, that what we must call the religion of the Ashantees, is a very low and gross kind of idolatry; yet, what is somewhat singular, they have the firmest belief in a future state of existence, which affords the only palliation that can be offered for the disgusting enormities just described. Both the murderers and their victims have, it is said, a perfect confidence that the persons sacrificed proceed immediately to a happier state of being.

This notion may tend to lessen, in some degree, the guilt of these horrible customs; but they cannot but

have a most injurious effect on the morals of the people in all respects ; and if we may trust the accounts of travellers, it is very difficult to make out what are the redeeming points in the character of the Ashantees. We cannot believe, however, that any race of men is naturally inclined to the practice of atrocious wickedness ; and as the character of the Mahomedan Ashantees is strikingly superior to that of their Pagan countrymen, there is reason to think that extreme ignorance and superstition, rather than a tiger-like delight in blood, may give rise to their manifold cruelties. It is also well worthy of remark, that the people of this and the neighboring countries are in a measure cut off from much of the mental communication with each other, in which all sympathy and kindness originates, by the almost incredible number of dialects that prevail among them. Within sixty miles of the Gold Coast, no fewer than seven or eight languages are spoken by various tribes, each unintelligible to the other. In such a Babel as this, where there is no mutual understanding, there can scarcely be a feeling of common humanity.

Perhaps if we could trace to its source all the hatred and bad feeling existing in the world, either among individuals or nations, we might find that it arose mostly from mutual ignorance and misunderstanding.

THE TARTAR SETTLERS

OF THE SEA OF ASOPH.

ON the northern shores of the Sea of Asoph we find, in the recently settled tribes of Nogay Tartars, a branch of the great Mongolian family, a very interesting example of a people who have lately abandoned the nomadic life for that of the settled tiller of the ground. The change has been made in circumstances not entirely favorable; for they are, of course, subject to the control of the worst and most barbarous of European governments, and the climate exposes them to extreme vicissitudes of heat and cold. Though lying in about the same latitude as the south of France, the cold of the winter is greater than we ever experience in England, and the heat of the summer almost equal to that of the north of Africa; for the rays of the sun are poured down with unmitigated fierceness.

on these treeless plains ; and as neither mountains nor forests intervene to protect the country from the piercing winds that in winter blow from the Frozen Ocean and Siberia, they rage here with tremendous violence. Rain falls but very seldom, so that the country frequently suffers from drought ; but the rain, when it does come, brings forth a rapid and abundant vegetation. A great part of the territory of the Nogays consists of a fine rich soil, sometimes as much as five or six feet deep, yielding an abundant harvest of every grain committed to it, and producing spontaneously luxuriant grass, aromatic herbs, and splendid flowers, especially tulips of every gorgeous dye, and yellow and violet-colored lilies.

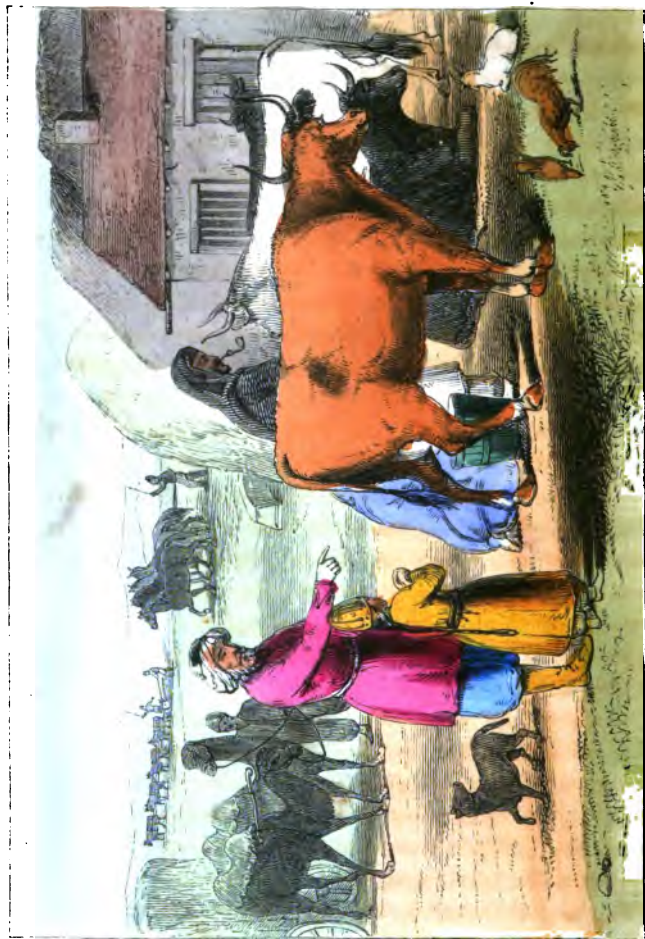
The word *Nogay* is said to signify in the Tartar language, unsettled, fugitive ; but the appellation is probably derived from that bestowed on the celebrated warrior Nogaya, who, in the year 1261, separated himself from the great Golden Horde, and migrated with his people to the shores of the Black Sea. The tribe has since been estimated at as many as five hundred thousand *kettles*, or families, of whom many still lead the nomadic life about the plains of Astrachan, and among the mountains of the Caucasus ; and it is only since the year 1808, that about sixty thousand of them have been induced to build houses, and confine themselves to one spot, a measure, however, more of necessity than of choice ; for they have the same

aversion to fixed habitations as their ancestors the Scythians and Huns of old.

For many years they continued to look back with longing to their former wandering mode of life, and even made two or three attempts to resume it. On one occasion their intention had proceeded so far, that many had sold all they possessed, and bought themselves tents, pack oxen, and wagons, such as their people had formerly used for their migrations, and had arranged a plan for rising *en masse*, and moving off again to the Steppes of Central Asia. Finding their intentions frustrated by the Russian Government, they next petitioned for leave to return to their nomadic habits; this was refused, and as they have become gradually surrounded by Russian and German husbandmen, they have been compelled to reconcile themselves to a settled life.

When a Nogay Tartar is about to build himself a house, the first thing he has to do is to make the bricks; and for this purpose he digs out the earth to a depth of about three feet, in a space of from twelve to fifteen feet diameter; then he brings water and short hay and straw to the place, and by making several horses gallop round and round on it many times, kneads it to a proper consistency. He then presses the clay into a wooden mould, and dries his bricks in the sun. Within the space which he has cleared, he then builds up a wall to the height of about six feet—

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A NOGAY FARM.

[illegible]

Most of the people in the village are poor. They are in a state of distress because of the drought. They are worried about the future of their children. They are trying to find a way to survive. They are looking for help from the government. They are asking for food and clothing. They are begging for mercy. They are crying for help. They are suffering from hunger and thirst. They are dying of disease. They are in a state of despair. They are losing hope. They are giving up. They are surrendering. They are begging for help. They are asking for mercy. They are crying for help. They are suffering from hunger and thirst. They are dying of disease. They are in a state of despair. They are losing hope. They are giving up. They are surrendering.



merely laying the bricks one upon another, without using any mortar, and leaving little spaces for windows and a door. Within this wall he makes three or four divisions, and lays rafters across the top, over which the gable roof is made, first with beams and laths, over this with a covering of reeds and brushwood, which is then covered again with ashes to the thickness of about a foot or more, and the roof soon becomes overgrown with grass, and is impervious to rain. In the middle a hole is left for the smoke, and sometimes, though rarely, a kind of chimney built with bricks. The door has hinges and a bolt, and the windows are filled up with wooden trellis work, or in winter with a piece of thin skin, which, though allowing some light to pass through, is of course not transparent. In the best houses glass is sometimes used. The building is then plastered inside and outside with clay, and afterwards whitewashed. Stones are not used at all, and the wood is very scarce, and mostly bought of the Russian and German settlers, who bring it from the Dnieper.

Most of the present generation of Nogays are willing to confess that for the very cold weather these warm clay cottages are preferable to the old tents in which their fathers dwelt; but in the summer they can never refrain from expressing their longing for the old movable habitation of poles and felt. They are beginning to perceive, however, that on the whole the

former are preferable ; and every year, if not larger, at all events better houses are built, for which more wood and iron are employed ; but two great evils remain,—the quantity of smoke, which fills them so that in certain winds one can hardly breathe without lying down upon the floor, and the numbers of earth fleas by which they are infested. The interior of these cottages is divided into a fore house or kitchen, a sleeping apartment and an inner room, which, among those who have adopted the Mahommedan religion, is called the harem. The furniture and utensils are of course few and simple. In the kitchen we find, first the old Tartar family kettle, by which the population is counted ; then a great leathern vessel, made often of the whole skin of a young ox or calf, exactly such as are used in the Mongol tents ; then a trough used for a variety of purposes ; a bucket fastened to a rope or long pole, for drawing water ; and an article which we must call a table, though it is only about five or six inches above the floor ; this is used both in preparing food, and as a tray to serve it upon. The commoner kinds of tools—such as spades, shovels, saws, and gimlets—are also usually found in the kitchen ; and amongst the richer Nogays a few more sieves, bowls, and dishes than are possessed by the poor. There are, however, but few distinctions of this kind among the Nogays ; the rich man enjoys little more of convenience and luxury than his poorer neighbor ; some-

times even he endeavors to conceal his riches, and he always places his principal pride in the increase of his flocks and herds, and not in his style of living. The inner apartments are furnished with woollen carpets and mats of straw or reeds, a chest for keeping money and ornaments or other valuables, mattresses, cushions, and coverlets, which are kept rolled up during the day ; and among the wealthy, towels, bedsteads, and curtains, to protect them from the gnats. The villages of these Tartars are mostly situated in the hollows, not deep enough to be called valleys, often found on the Steppes, and described as having the appearance of a pressure produced by a gigantic hand having been laid on the surface of the plain ; they are probably caused by the sinking of the lower strata, and they have the advantage of retaining the moisture long after the rest of the country has been parched up by the heat of the summer. The existence of a large pond or brook is always an inducement to build a village near it ; and sometimes an advantageous situation is found in the deep clefts or ravines which intersect the high terrace land of the Steppe, and are the former beds of rivers that have now changed their course. The low houses covered with grass, and surrounded by haystacks and dunghills, can, notwithstanding their whitewash, often scarcely be distinguished till the traveller is in the midst of them. Each village has usually a Mosque, or even sometimes

two or three, but without towers or minarets, and looking little better than sheds. There are also magazines for corn to which every Tartar family has to furnish a certain contribution, and a clay hut, half underground, which serves for a school-house, principally for the boys intended to be brought up as priests.

In form and feature the Nogay Tartar still bears traces of his Mongol origin, though mingled with others characteristic of various nations with whom his race has been associated since they left their original seat, especially with the handsome people of the Caucasus. They are mostly of middle stature and athletic figure, and their deportment is upright and even stately. The brownish yellow complexion, which in the nomadic races occasionally verges almost to a black, is in a great measure dependent on the degree of exposure to weather; and the Nogay still retains the fine, regular, resplendently white teeth, which are the only beauty of the Mongol face. The women often have the delicate figure, fine eyes, and small hands and feet which distinguish the women of Circassia.

Living in as simple a manner, and inhabiting a similar country, they retain the extraordinary sharpness of sight and hearing of their nomadic ancestry; but the senses of taste, smell, and touch, appear to be very dull, a circumstance sufficiently accounted for by the smoke and the compound of smells observable in their

habitations, the hardening of their skins by the sun and cold winds, and the variety of substances, including clay, with which the children are accustomed to cover themselves.

A very important part of the ordinary dress of the Nogay is furnished by the skins of his lambs and sheep, tanned, and made up by the women ; he has also a linen garment or shirt, though seldom more than one at a time ; and the rich wear pelisses of colored cotton, blue nankeen, or even silk, bound with a sash passing several times round the body, and over this in cold weather a coat or mantle of fur. A cap of blue cloth, much decorated, is worn by the higher classes, and in the summer full trowsers of white linen. In general, the fulness of their garments is neither so inconveniently abundant as that of the Turks, nor so close and scanty as that of the nations who have been said to

“ Live, with all their lordly speeches,
The slaves of buttons and tight breeches.”

The Nogays have also mantles and trowsers of scarlet cloth, which are worn on grand occasions ; and young men, who have a leaning to dandyism, sport rings of silver or brass, enriched with precious stones or cut-glass.

The chief stock of finery belonging to a Tartar fa-

mily is, however, exhibited on the persons of the young girls, who are often quite encumbered with their numerous decorations. On their heads they wear for full dress a cap of red cloth, as high and large as a pail, hung all round with silver coins, mostly Turkish. Over the forehead hangs down a row of pieces of red coral, and at the back are introduced shells and many other ornaments. Their long black hair is plaited, and hangs down behind, finished off with two pieces of white linen twisted into a rope, and reaching to the ankle. At festivals and "high solemnities" girls wear silk caftans, of blue, red, white, and all colors but black, one above another, and fastened by a broad girdle and massive silver clasps. Through the right nostril they pass a wire ring, on which small pearls are threaded, and their ear rings, of uncommon size and weight, are often connected together by a chain that hangs over the breast, and the whole costume is enriched with beads, buckles, and little dangling rolls of metal. Considering the great proportion which the expense of these ornaments must bear to the general cost of a Tartar family, it is fortunate that among these people fashion has almost lost her character of fickleness, and that a Nogay belle is quite satisfied with the finery of her great-great-grandmother. The ornamental part of the young ladies' wardrobe is also sometimes regarded as a sort of

savings' bank, to which recourse may be had by the parents in times of need.

Poor girls are, of course, not embellished in quite the splendid style we have been describing; but it is usually a principle with a Nogay father to dress his daughters as well as he can, as it enhances the price he may expect for them from the bridegroom. The market price of young ladies is calculated at so many cows.

Among many other Turkish customs adopted by these people, is the general use of the veil, which to a married woman at least is considered indispensable: for the rich it is made of light thin stuff, and decorated at the ends with colored fringe; but the poor make any rag answer the purpose. The Nogays also, like the Turkish women, wear wide trowsers and yellow boots, which are kept from the dirt when they go out, by stilts or wooden pattens, about three inches high, and which are also worn by the men for a similar purpose. On the whole, the Nogays must certainly be considered as a well-dressed people; and the poorest are scarcely worse clad than many in a similar situation unfortunately are among ourselves.

In endeavoring to understand the condition of any people, the two most important points to be ascertained are, perhaps, the character of their religion, and the nature of their ordinary occupations; as the one will generally give us an insight into their mental state, and

the other enable us to form a correct picture of their daily life. The subject of the religion of a people beyond the merely savage state is, however, too grave and high a one to be entered upon in a little work of this nature ; and we must therefore content ourselves with pointing out a few of the general features and outward customs of that of the Nogays. The notions of mere savages on this subject are so few and rude, that their religion may almost be considered as that of children.

The Nogay Tartars had adopted the Mohammedan religion long before they had abandoned their nomadic and predatory habits ; but it does not appear that it is likely to lead them to a higher or purer state of morals than that of Buddha, still professed by their Mongol brethren, might do. Of both it may be said, that they contain far more good precepts than their followers usually practise, though it may be doubted whether they generally fall as far short of their standard of right and wrong as we Christians do of ours.

The great principle of the Mahommedan faith is resignation to the will of God ; and justice, benevolence, and self-denial, are positively enjoined by it : to submit patiently to suffering and misfortune, to be faithful to agreements, to give to those who have need, to our relations and friends, to the poor, the orphan, and the wandering pilgrim or beggar, to ransom slaves, to be punctual in the performance of religious duties,

to worship God only, and to believe that he is all-wise, all-knowing, all-sustaining, and all-merciful ; that not the smallest insect crawls on the ground without his knowledge and care—all this is the duty of the good Mussulman ; and one who should truly and faithfully perform it, would have a right to be considered in any country as a good and pious man.

What distinguishes the Mussulman from all Pagans, as well as from large classes of Christians, is his aversion to the use of any image or picture in his religious services. The Koran forbids the representation of any living creature, and nothing of the kind is therefore ever found either in their mosques or houses. Drawings even of inanimate objects often seem to render pious Nogays uneasy ; and since they have never seen any pictures but those in the Armenian and Greek churches, they have an idea that no picture is ever made for any other purpose than that of worship. Every devout Nogay Mussulman is bound to pray at least five times in the twenty-four hours : the first prayer should be repeated before sunrise, and be accompanied by four prostrations to the earth ; the second, the great prayer at noon, by ten ; the third in the afternoon, by eight ; the evening prayer at sunset, by five : and let the appointed time find him at home or at the mosque, in the street or the market-place, he instantly breaks off whatever business he is engaged in, and goes through the prescribed ceremonies with

an appearance of profound abstraction from all worldly affairs. No noise, no spectacle can induce him to turn his attention from his devotional duty ; to understand the prayer he utters he does not consider as essential ; he says it is sufficient if God understands. Like the Buddhist, he makes great use of the rosary, and before commencing his prayer puts off his shoes as Moses and Joshua did when they entered on holy ground ; he must also not neglect to turn his face towards the city of Mecca.

The Tartars offer frequent sacrifices : on occasion of the birth of a child, at a wedding, before a journey, after a happy return, in consequence of a vow, in memory of deceased persons, &c. ; and they make sacrifices for sin, as well as of gratitude. On these occasions the family is all assembled before the house, surrounded by neighbors and invited guests, but especially by the poor. A Mollah or priest is present, and begins the ceremony by a silent prayer. The head of the animal—usually a cow or a sheep—is then turned towards Mecca, and it is slaughtered amidst loud invocations of the Holiest Name. The meat is then boiled, and during the time of its preparation other prayers are uttered, and many ablutions performed. The meat is distributed and consumed in the open air ; and the more persons are present to partake of the meal, the greater will be the blessing that will follow it, and the more the joy of him who offers the sacrifice. It is

customary, therefore, when a sacrificial banquet is to be held, to send round a crier to announce the fact, and invite young and old, rich and poor, to partake of it, while to the sick and infirm portions are sent home.

The custom of offering sacrifices is not originally a Mahommedan one, and is not prescribed in the Koran, but it appears to have existed from the very earliest times among all Oriental nations ; it is indeed one of the first manifestations of the feeling of religion amongst races even in the rudest condition, and we may observe traces of it amongst children when they offer to their parents a portion of the very gifts they have themselves bestowed. This may be called a sacrifice of gratitude ; the sacrifice for sin is altogether of a different nature.

The Ramadhan, or great fast of the Mahommedan year, lasts for thirty days ; and when it occurs in the summer, often involves considerable privation ; as from the time when it is light enough to distinguish a thread, till sunset, nothing must be eaten or drunk ; and the work in the fields has consequently to be performed during the heat of the day without any refreshment. At other times the fast is comparatively easy ; and as it is allowable to eat after sunset, many of the Mussulmans make themselves amends for fasting all day by eating all night. Among the Nogays the wife begins her cooking operations often as early as at noon,

and after her husband has eaten as much as he can possibly cram at one meal, wakes him up in the middle of the night to eat another. During the whole time of the fast no work is done that can be avoided, and every one sleeps as much as he can, so that the institution certainly does not answer its intended purpose of mortifying the flesh. The feasts, however, are more conscientiously observed.

The great festival of the Bairam commences with the very smallest streak that can be seen of the first new moon after the fast of the Ramadhan. The first day is mostly devoted to prayer and sacrifice ; but the succeeding ones almost wholly to pleasure, although alms are all the time freely distributed to the necessitous. The art of cookery, as it exists among the Nogay Tartars, on this day puts forth all its strength, and every person that enters the house must be entertained with presents of meat, cakes, &c. Every one puts on his best clothes ; the boys and young men mount their favorite steeds, and go galloping about exhibiting feats of horsemanship. Great processions of visitors of more mature age go from one village to another, the men on horseback, the women in wagons drawn by oxen, of course glittering in all the finery they can muster ; the little girls rejoice in swings put up for the occasion ; innumerable kisses are given and received ; through all the days no work is done but what is necessary for the care of the cattle ; and on

one day the cows are left unmilked, that the calves may suck their fill, and so have their share in the general joy.

At the festival of the Kurban the inhabitants of a village go out upon the open Steppe and sacrifice a sheep or a cow upon one of the grave hillocks of the ancient Mongol race, which are found in considerable numbers in many parts of them.

In every Nogay village reside several mollahs of various ranks, of whom the chief is called the Mufti. It is their duty to proclaim the hour of prayer from the mosque, to lead the devotional exercises, to give explanations of the Koran, and sometimes short addresses to the people to animate them to the performance of religious duties ; to officiate at weddings, at sacrifices by the sick and dying ; to keep school ; to illuminate the mosque, and to prepare amulets or charms to preserve men and cattle from harm ; for all which services they receive payment in corn, cattle, tallow, and skins, and occasionally in money. The priests are married, if they please, to more wives than one ; and they are allowed to possess and cultivate land, and take part in any occupation.

They may be known by the long white linen cloth, which they wear wound round their caps in the form of a turban, and on festal occasions by a robe of fine white woollen stuff, confined by a girdle, in which is stuck

the metal inkstand and reed pen, which indicates their possession of the accomplishment of writing.

These Mollahs stand by no means so high in the estimation of the people as the Lamas of the Mongols ; and their reputation for sanctity is rivalled or surpassed by that of the Hadjis, who have performed the difficult and meritorious act of a pilgrimage to Mecca, which very few of the Nogay Tartars are able to afford. The journey seldom takes, it is said, less than a year, or costs less than two hundred ducats,—a considerable sum for so poor a people ; and many therefore compound for the omission of the duty, by contributing to the expenses of those who are willing to undertake it.

One route is by one of the seaports of the Crimea to Odessa, thence to Constantinople, from there to Alexandria, and down the Red Sea to Medina and Mecca, in company with the great Egyptian caravan ; but the more usual course is through Syria and the Arabian Desert. The poor pilgrims are exposed on the journey to manifold dangers and privations ; to hunger and thirst, heat and cold and fatigue, as well as to the infectious diseases and to the extortions of the Turkish Pashas in every province they pass through, and the exactions of the Arab military escort, which, whether they wish it or not, they are compelled to take and pay for ; and it is no very uncommon occurrence for them to be robbed, and even murdered, before they reach the holy city,—the goal of their wishes, and the

reward of all their sufferings. Many never return ; but those who do, value themselves not a little for the remainder of their days on the feat they have performed, regarding themselves, and being regarded by others, as finished saints. The Hadji, it is said, is usually of all the Tartar Mussulmans the most strict in the observance of the outward and ceremonial parts of his religion, and the most neglectful of its higher spiritual duties.

The Nogay settlers still retain enough of their old habits to prefer greatly the employments that fall to them as herdsmen to all farming operations. The care of the cattle on the Steppes, the trade carried on with them at the fairs in the neighborhood, and the breaking in and training the wild horses and oxen for the work required of them, are, and will probably continue for some time to be, their favorite occupations. The numbers of their herds are usually greater than they ought to be in proportion to their land, as the price of them is excessively low, and they have no market for their milk and butter ; the latter, indeed, is seldom good enough to be worth buying. Cheese they only make for their own use ; and the running about over the wide Steppe to search for cattle that have strayed, and the driving them about to distant markets, consumes much time, and employs many hands. The latter business, however, is a labor of love to the Nogay, as it gives him again a taste of the rambling life to which he looks back so fondly, and he often goes

dragging his cattle about from one market to another, rather with a view to pleasure than to business. What his pleasure can be it is often difficult to make out, for he is exposed to many slights and annoyances in his dealings with the Russians and Germans ; he takes no part in their dancing and drinking ; contents himself with the dry, roasted corn that he has brought with him from home ; prepares his frugal meal, and sleeps, wrapped in his sheepskins, on the bare earth under the open sky, and exposes himself to cold and wet and various hardships, for the mere enjoyment of going to the fair. If he can make such a barter with his cattle that he shall not be a positive loser, he is quite satisfied with this employment of his time ; and he seems to take a delight in even looking on at the making of bargains in which he has no concern. It is even by no means unusual for these Tartars to arrive at the place where a fair is to be held, eight days before the time ; and many of them pass the greater part of the year in going from one to another.

The cattle belonging to every village is generally divided into two or three herds, and driven out on the Steppe by the several owners in turn, always on horseback, for in this country horses are so cheap, that even beggars are often seen riding about, and very well mounted. The herdsman usually leaves his horse and the cattle together, and returns to the village, coming back in the evening to look after and

collect them—no easy task ; for as there are no enclosures on the almost boundless Steppe, but, at most, divisions are only marked with a ploughshare, the cattle stray in all directions, besides often doing much mischief among the corn, and causing many quarrels. The Tartars breed sheep, horses, and camels, as well as horned cattle ; but the camels are by no means so serviceable to them in their present condition as when wandering over the stony terrace lands of Asia ; and they do not appear to thrive so well on the rich pasturage of these plains as on the coarse scanty grass of Tartary and Mongolia. Most of them have a ring through the nose, through which a cord is passed, which serves to guide them ; they are harnessed in pairs, and draw immense loads of corn, and other produce of the country, to the markets of Southern Russia. The Tartar women also make from their hair a very close, thick stuff, which resists all rain, and is worn by the men over their other clothing. The use of these animals is, however, much declining, as they are scarcely worth keeping, especially since they are mostly vicious and troublesome.

Breeding and dealing in horses is an occupation for which the Nogay Tartar shows a peculiar aptitude and partiality ; partly, perhaps, because it involves a great deal of moving about, and enables him to lead a wild, roving kind of life. When out on the Steppe with

his herd, he eats, drinks, and almost sleeps on horse-back.

The vast herds of horses seen on the Steppe, though they all have owners, exhibit in the wild freedom and grace of their movements a proud unconsciousness of their dependent state. It is, indeed, not uncommon to hear them called wild horses ; but, correctly speaking, wild horses are not met with nearer than on the plains by the sea of Aral. In appearance and habits, however, there is no discoverable difference between them. The Nogay horses range over a wide extent of country, and subsist on a poorer kind of pasturage than would be necessary for horned cattle. From Easter to October they remain grazing day and night on the Steppe ; but during the winter months they are usually taken into a sort of shelter for the night, and in the day are turned out, and have to scrape away the snow with their feet to get at the scanty grass beneath. The shelter is nothing like a stable, but merely an enclosed space, with an earthen mound, and a sort of roof towards the north, to keep off the most piercing wind.

In the spring, these horses have terrible battles to sustain, sometimes with the wolves, and sometimes with the horses of other herds. They rush at each other with tails and manes erect, like angry lions, screaming and howling, too, like wild beasts, and tearing each other with their teeth. Upon the wolves

they often charge in a solid phalanx,—and trample them under their feet. But should their first attack fail, the poor horses have a bad chance, for the wolves, at this season half famished, fly at their throats in packs of ten or twelve at a time, and never leave them till they have dragged them to the ground.

On the whole, the sheep is, as in other pastoral countries, the animal most advantageous to the Nogay farmers ; and they accordingly rear immense flocks of what is called the fat-tailed kind ; but even these must be diminished as the land comes to be employed more and more for the purposes of agriculture.

The Nogays have a proverb that says, “ God gave the Russians a plough, but the Tartars a wheel ;” by which they mean to express their contempt for the agricultural life, which binds man to a certain spot, instead of allowing him to roam over many lands ; and requires also more labor than that of the shepherd or herdsman. Little as this life is agreeable to their taste, however, they are beginning to perceive that, even in the Steppes, it is more advantageous. The Nogay may have as much land as he chooses to cultivate ; and, if he pleases, a certain quantity of corn for seed from the Russian government, which is very desirous of turning these vast plains to greater profit by encouraging settlers upon them. Should he stand in need of farming implements, or trained cattle, he

can easily obtain them from a richer neighbor, in exchange for a certain amount of service.

The lands tilled by the people of one village lie close together, but frequently so far from the village itself, that at seed and harvest time the laborers have to bivouac on the open field, as they cannot go and return on the same day. They usually pitch tents, where they carry on their cooking operations, and are supplied from time to time from the village with corn, meat, buttermilk, water, and whatever else they require.

The ploughing time is generally the month of March, with which the Nogay year commences, but the first operation of Tartar husbandry is often to burn away the weeds that in some places shoot up to such a height as to hide a man on horseback. These burnings are very advantageous, as they not only rid the soil of its encumbrances, but manure it for a new crop; but they must be managed very cautiously, as when a fire is once kindled on the Steppe, it is rather hard to say where it will stop. In some cases, it has been known to sweep along for hundreds of miles, destroying cattle and corn-fields and even whole villages, in its course; but this has been in summer, when the grass was excessively dry. The only safe plan is to dig a deep, wide trench, round the space intended to be burnt; but even this will be sometimes

insufficient to arrest the progress of the flames, as the wind will carry the burning particles over it

The ploughs used by the Nogays are excessively clumsy, and require ten or twelve oxen to draw them. The sower usually walks first, and scatters the seed; the plough follows, and the harrow, consisting of a log of wood, is dragged after the plough, to crush the large lumps of earth. Ploughshares, sickles, and scythes, and all iron implements, are bought by the Tartars from the Russians; but whatever is made of wood is of home manufacture, and this includes the wagon, in which no iron is used. In reaping, the Nogays follow one of many customs which they appear to have derived from the ancient Israelites: "And when ye reap the field, ye shall not reap wholly the corners of your field, neither shall ye gather the gleanings of your harvests, and neither shall ye glean your vineyard, nor gather every grape of the vineyard; ye shall leave them for the poor and the stranger." (Levit. xix.; Exod. x.) They leave a portion of corn standing at one end of the field. In threshing, also, we recognize the mode alluded to by the prophet Isaiah, as practised by the Hebrews. A circular space before the house is cleared of grass and dust, sprinkled with water, and a stake driven into the middle of it. The sheaves of corn are then spread round it, and several horses attached to a string, one end of which is made fast to the stake. They are then driven round and

round, the string of course winding round the stake, and bringing them at last up to the centre of the circle. They are then turned in a contrary direction, and driven round again, so as to unwind it. The corn is preserved in round pits, dug near the house, of about four feet in diameter at the bottom, but at the top only wide enough to allow a man to pass through. Into these pits the corn is poured, and they are then covered with hay and boards, and over these again with earth, and the grass soon grows over the top, so as to render the spot unrecognizable to a stranger, who may go driving or galloping over the magazine, without ever suspecting its presence.

A Nogay family that owns a house, and has sheep and corn in abundance, oxen for the labors of the field, and milch cows, cannot be considered as poor, for all their real wants are supplied, and they have no idea of the many superfluities beyond their reach. There are few, however, who have not over and above what is required for their immediate consumption, as much corn and cattle to carry to market as will purchase them in exchange fruit and tea (usually the brick tea used by the Mongol races, but for which the Nogays have to pay a much higher price), as well as farming implements and other tools. Some few of these people possess property to the amount of seven or eight hundred pounds; but these are very few, and, in general, a "moderate competence" signifies, in the esti-

mation of a Nogay Tartar, enough to buy a wife, an iron kettle, a few head of cattle, some mattresses, wooden dishes, and spoons. Has he this much, he builds himself a house, and becomes "a respectable man."

Should his capital not be equal to such an expenditure, it is usual for him to go to service for a certain number of years, until he has earned the price of the maiden—we cannot say whom he is wooing, for nothing like wooing takes place—whom he is desirous of purchasing. It is not allowed that he shall serve in her family, as Jacob did for Rachel, lest the young couple have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with and attached to each other. This would be contrary to Nogay etiquette. He must remain as much as possible a stranger to her.

The circumstance that, perhaps, more than any other, tends to retard the progress of the Nogays towards a true civilisation is the position of the women, which is attributable mainly to the influence—in this respect, certainly injurious—of the Mahommedan religion. They are considered to belong wholly as property to the other sex, and to have no other duty or object in life but to serve them. The father sells his daughter, the brother the sister; and in the division of an inheritance the females are regarded precisely in the same light as the domestic animals. Whoever obtains them in his share receives so many cattle the less, and is

equally at liberty to dispose of them to whom he pleases. Even a widow goes with her children to the next male heir, who may either sell her or keep her, as he thinks proper.

It need not, therefore, surprise us, that the women seldom appear to have much sense of duty towards their husbands or children, especially as a Nogay, who can afford it, thinks himself at perfect liberty to take three or four wives if he pleases, being allowed to do so by the precepts of the Koran. The whip is often enough resorted to, to maintain order in a family so constituted; and the women are so accustomed to think this treatment quite in the natural order of things, that they receive rather with astonishment than gratitude any interference of a stranger in their behalf. A German traveller, who spent some years among the Nogays, mentions having once come between his host and a wife, whom he was beating till the blood came, and being asked by the lady what business it was of his? The husband, Ali Ameton, excused himself by saying it was the only way to manage Nogay women. "They do not and cannot love us," he added, "when we buy them, and so we must make them fear us." This same Ali once requested his German friend to go and buy another wife for him, which it is not the etiquette for a man to do for himself. Two young ladies, just arrived from the Crimea, were understood to be on sale, and not being of genuine Tartar blood, were to

be had cheap. The deputy wooer accordingly went to the house of the parents, and on presenting them with a piece of money, was shown into the inner apartment, where the damsels were seated, stiff and silent, and, of course, in full dress to be viewed. The only points on which Ali required information, were, whether they were fat, and had black hair; and as both these questions could be satisfactorily answered, he wished to close the bargain. It happened, however, that there were many bidders, and as his was not the highest offer, he was unsuccessful. Ali afterwards, in a fit of pique, bought himself a very aged widow, whom he obtained as a very great bargain, but the poor old lady was so unmercifully plagued by the first younger wife, that she took the only means allowed her of obtaining her liberty,—she robbed her husband; that is, in order to induce him to drive her out of the house. Had she merely run away, no one could have taken her in.

When such are the relations between a man and his wife, it is not surprising that the state of moral feeling among these oppressed women is bad enough. They seldom scruple to help themselves out of any difficulty by as many falsehoods as they find necessary, and would probably get into more mischief were they not kept so fully and constantly employed. They have, indeed, more to do than it is possible they should do properly,—to spin, and make up the woollen garments

worn by themselves and their families, to prepare skins, to make soap, to fetch water, to grind corn, to cook, sometimes many times in a day, for guests as well as for their husbands, besides nursing the young children, and performing other indispensable duties. They are also naturally enough, considering their total want of education, and the immoderate demands made upon them, very disorderly in their habits, and often increase their labors by their total want of arrangement. It is not uncommon, for instance, when they have washed their clothes tolerably clean, for them to spread them out upon a dunghill to dry ; and when making their bread with excellent flour, to give the children bits of the dough to play with, and after these delicate morsels have been rolled about on the dirty clay floor of the hut, they are collected and kneaded up into the batch. The style of cookery in a Nogay *ménage* is, indeed, it must be confessed, such as it is not desirable to inquire too closely into ; and the general housekeeping somewhat sluttish, and consequently wasteful ; but there is seldom any appearance of want.

There are a few who may be regarded as paupers, and subsist almost wholly by begging, or taking advantage of the hospitality of many of their countrymen, being constant visitors at weddings, public entertainments, and sacrifices, or wherever, from whatever cause, there appears an unusual plenty of meat. They often go from house to house with a bag, into

which every one puts a handful of corn, and sometimes they carry also an earthen pot to receive contributions of butter and fat. As has been mentioned, they frequently ride about on horseback, and do not even give themselves the trouble to alight at the several houses at which they call, but announce their presence by a loud doleful cry; and as the giving of alms is a duty expressly enjoined by the Koran on all the followers of Islam, they seldom depart empty handed.

Hospitality towards strangers in general has, it is said, declined considerably among the Nogays since the change in their mode of life; but this is not surprising, when we consider the character of almost all the travellers who find their way to this remote spot,—wandering American traders, petty Russian officials, and such as are very likely to abuse the hospitality offered to them. It often happens, too, that there are but one or two houses in a village to which any one would choose to go, and these therefore have often more guests than they desire; and though they could not be induced to name a price for their entertainment, certainly expect it to be acknowledged by a present. There are, however, others who esteem it an honor to receive a stranger, and, like Abraham and Lot, entreat him to enter their dwelling. Whoever does so, may place himself and his goods with the most perfect confidence in the hands of his host. No member of the

household will ever do anything to wrong him, and should it be necessary, will even take his part against all enemies. The inner chamber of the house is given up to the stranger, and the wife and children have to sleep in the kitchen. Warm water for washing is brought to him, and often a sheep slaughtered, that he may not have to take merely what has been left. The guest takes possession without ceremony of the best place, and when the meal is served, invites the master of the house and the family to partake with him. It happens sometimes, indeed, that a traveller who is at all fastidious on the point of cleanliness, prefers sleeping in his travelling conveyance before the door, or upon the open Steppe; but should any lady or gentleman feel inclined to place themselves as boarders in the family of a Nogay Tartar, they may do so for the not quite exorbitant sum of about six-pence a week, and feel sure of being neither robbed nor starved.

THE MOUNTAINEERS

OF THE CAUCASUS.



Across the isthmus that separates the Black from the Caspian Sea, rises like a dark mighty wall, one of the oldest ranges of mountains in the world, towering in many places to a height far exceeding that of the loftiest Alpine peaks of Switzerland. The highest regions present scenes of the wildest and most picturesque grandeur,—huge jagged rocks, with their summits clothed in perpetual snow, or rearing their vast masses, black and frowning, to the sky—precipices of many thousand feet in depth—avalanches and roaring torrents. The most frequented pass even—a ravine called the Caucasian Gates—is a fearful defile, shut in by precipitous walls of porphyry and schist, with awful abysses opening beneath, through which a raging flood has forced its way. A wonderful con-

trast, however, to the sublime desolation of these regions is found as we descend but a little way the sides of the mountains. In amount and variety of vegetation, the lower districts of the Caucasus are almost unrivalled. In many places blooming plants mingle even with the snow of centuries, and every tree, shrub, fruit, or grain found from the warmest parts of the Temperate Zone to the Pole is either native to, or may be raised in these mountains. From every part of them countless streams rush down towards one or the other sea, and as we descend they become more and more fertile, till we find a country abounding in forests and fountains, orchards, vineyards, cornfields, and pastures mingling in rich and picturesque variety. One region, from the exquisite beauty of the flowers it produces, has been called the "Paradise of Roses;" and on the swampy shores of the Black and Caspian Seas, the vegetation is so exuberant as to convert it into an almost impenetrable jungle. In many places the forests of oak, cedar, cypress, beech, hazel, fir, pine, and hosts of other trees, are so thick, that a passage through them has to be cut with the hatchet. In the cultivated spots, plenteous harvests of wheat, barley, rye, oats, and millet, are produced with scarcely any labor; in the warmer plains and valleys grow cotton, flax, hemp, as well as rice, tobacco, indigo; whilst the earth untilld, brings forth flowers of every scent and dye, as well as grapes,

pomegranates, figs, apricots, mulberries, and many other fruits.

The whole range of the Caucasus extends about seven hundred miles from east to west, and is from two to three hundred miles broad ; but within this space are collected a greater number of different nations and languages than are found in any country in the world, except in the part of Africa before mentioned. This difference has produced its usual effect of giving rise to a great deal of hostile feeling among tribes, who, if they understood each other better, would probably have been better friends ; but of late years the attacks of their formidable enemies, the Russians, have awakened a more brotherly feeling among them, and induced them to forget many of their petty feuds, and make common cause for the defence of their country.

The largest and most important country of the Caucasus is Circassia,* occupying its northern slope on the side nearest the Black Sea ; and it is inhabited by one of the noblest and handsomest races in existence ; speaking of whom, an Arabian geographer of the twelfth century says, " Praised be Allah, for having created mortals so infinitely beautiful and perfect : " and who excite the greater interest at present,

* The name of this country is more properly spelt Tcherkessia, or Tcherkeskaia : but I have preferred the above as more familiar

from the dangerous, if not desperate struggle in which they have long been engaged with an enemy so immensely superior to them in strength, as the Russians. The Circassians are divided into various tribes or clans, comprising rulers and elders, or what we may call princes and nobles, freemen and slaves ; but the latter are mostly prisoners of war, and very kindly treated ; and in the general assemblies of the people, at which all affairs of importance are discussed and decided, the freemen or common people have the same influence as the princes and nobles. In domestic life the head of the family rules over his kindred or clan with the complete authority of the patriarchal ages ; but the union of several families constitutes a Brotherhood, whose chief is selected for superior valor or wisdom. The Brotherhoods consist mostly of about twenty families, and are called sometimes by the name of the most numerous family, but more frequently by that of the river or valley where they dwell ; they are united by the closest ties. If a member is killed in war, the brethren maintain his wife and children ; if any one commits an offence the whole society pays the fine ; but on a frequent repetition of it, the Brotherhood takes on itself the office of punishment. Should any member fall into poverty and distress, the brothers maintain him ; and, in all cases, perform towards each other the duties of the nearest kindred—“ one is for all, and all for one ;” even slaves are ad-

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A CIRCASSIAN PARLIAMENT.

mitted to join them, being regarded as members of the families they serve. The general assemblies of the people exercise authority over the various Brotherhoods, as the Brotherhood does over single families. These assemblies strikingly resemble those which are described as taking place in the early ages of European history among all the Germanic nations, and present a most picturesque scene. They are held in the open air, in some spot which is regarded as sacred ; mostly by an ancient tree, and towards evening ; and the debates are usually prolonged by moonlight to a late hour. The members form a great circle, with a space left free in the midst, round which sit the elders or nobles ; next comes the dense throng of freemen of mature age ; the outer circle is formed by the young men on horseback ; and, generally, crowds of boys are perched as spectators in the trees around the sylvan parliament. Very severe punishments are affixed to the offence of interrupting the proceedings, or offering any insult to one of its members ; and the first act of the assembly is to choose three persons to preside over it. The different ranks vote according to ages, the majority of voices of the whole assembly decide all questions, and there is no appeal from it.

Crimes of a dark character are of very rare occurrence among this people, but thefts of small amount,—such as of a horse or a cow, were formerly common enough, but until lately not punished at all, being regarded

rather in the light of a game of skill among the young men of different fraternities ; the booty, if once carried to a place of safety, was not demanded back again but considered as a lost stake, though the keeper of the herd, who had been careless enough to lose it, had to pay the value. In cases of theft among members of the same Brotherhood, the culprit had to pay nine times the value of the article stolen ; as it was rightly judged such an offence tended to disturb the peace of the society : and for the same reason, since the war with the Russians, thefts are punished, wherever they occur, lest they should give rise to feuds among different tribes.

The terrible custom of retaliation for murder, existing amongst almost all uncivilized nations, prevails still in full force among the Circassians. Blood must be paid with blood ; the kindred of the person slain seek out and put to death the murderer ; and his relations again take a similar vengeance. Murder follows murder, till one of the families is, perhaps, driven from the country, and even then is not always secure, for, as it is a point of honor, the Circassians will sometimes undertake long journeys in pursuit of one whom they have devoted to death. Revenge is regarded as a sacred duty.

The free Circassian is much inclined to consider war and the chase of bears, wolves, gigantic wild boars, and other dangerous creatures, inhabiting the

mountain, as his only proper occupation ; and to leave the care of the cattle and agriculture, as well as domestic duties, to the women and slaves.

The great abundance of animal life prolonged in these countries the period, in which hunting formed the chief source of subsistence, much later than usual ; and even now, deer, hares, pheasants, and many other kinds of game, are abundant in the extreme ; but the people possess numerous flocks of sheep and goats, as well as milch cows, buffaloes, oxen, and horses. Land is held in a remarkably primitive manner. Every family takes as much as it finds convenient to cultivate, and no one seems to wish to call a greater extent his own than what he can usefully occupy, so that there is still enough for all. Any one finding ground unoccupied, may take possession, and settle upon it forthwith. A few years ago, when the Russians seized on one of the most fertile districts, on the coast of the Black Sea, and drove the inhabitants further up into the mountains, some disputes about land arose in the district to which they fled, but they were settled in the general assemblies of the people. Sometimes a rich man will assist a poorer neighbor to cultivate a piece of ground, and then the produce is divided between them ; but no other payment than this is ever made for land.

The cultivation of the ground is, of course, carried on in a very rough and simple style. The land is set

fire to in the spring, and the field ploughed once slightly over, to plough in the ashes for manure. The seed is then put in, and the ground harrowed with boughs of trees. When the land immediately round a village has been used several times, the inhabitants take possession of a tract further off; and when the distance has become inconvenient, they generally move off with all their chattels, and build another hamlet : ploughing, sowing, mowing grass, and reaping are all carried on in common by the inhabitants of a village, and the fields, where great troops of people are busied in these cheerful labors, have quite the appearance of a merrymaking. Passing travellers are sometimes hailed and called on to lend a hand, and usually received with a shout of welcome that rings in wild echoes among the mountains.

For the Lesgians, a people who inhabit the highest mountain ridges that can be cultivated, agriculture is a more difficult and toilsome business. They have to form artificial terraces, by building up a wall perpendicularly before the face of the rock, filling the intermediate space with stones and earth, and laying upon the top a vegetable soil. The formation and maintenance of these terraces is, of course, a troublesome business, but it is abundantly repaid by their rich produce. Along the edges, trees are usually planted to shade the corn, and, when necessary, rivulets conducted into them.

Few families own more cattle or raise more corn than is necessary for their own consumption, but near almost every dwelling is a garden where many kinds of fruit and vegetables are grown ; and there is always a row of bee-hives, for honey is an article in great use, as the Circassians have, it is said, a sort of passion for rearing bees, and regard the insect with a superstitious veneration, their increase being considered as a sure harbinger of good fortune. Mead and metheglin are much liked, and honey and milk are very important articles in the simple Circassian kitchen.

It is, indeed, principally for the sake of milk and for draught oxen that cattle are kept by the Circassians, as they seldom eat beef. They are, in general, very temperate in their diet, but when a guest makes his appearance, Circassian cookery puts forth all its strength to do him honor. The sons go out and slaughter a sheep or a goat, the best joints of which are soon seen roasting on the spit and boiling in a great kettle, while the housewife and her daughters are busied in baking fresh bread in the ashes, or preparing the favorite pillau—the same dish of rice and mutton which is eaten all over the East. Numbers of savoury herbs and roots are boiled with the meat, and the bread is made into flat cakes of about an inch and a half thick and a foot in diameter. Milk and water are the usual drinks, but a pleasant fermented liquor is made with

honey and grape juice, as well as a thick beer from barley meal and water.

The houses of the Circassians lie mostly in clusters in the wooded dells, often shaded by the rich draperies of the wild vines, that are festooned from tree to tree. In some of the highest districts, indeed, dwellings tolerably spacious are cut out of the solid rock, and reached by terraces and bridges of wood or stone; but over the greatest part of the country they are constructed with the trunks of trees, stuffed in the interstices with straw or grass, and plastered with clay. The roof, which is flat, and made by boards laid across the top, serves, in the spring and autumn, as a place of recreation for the family. The door and a chimney are mostly the only openings of these huts, for very few have yet attained to the distinction of a window; the floor is as nature made it, and in wet weather the rain often finds an easy entrance through the roof. Opposite to the door is a semicircular space for a fire-hearth, and to the right of this is a raised place covered with carpets and cushions, which serves as a bed for the master, as well as for a sofa or divan for him and his guests. On the left of the door are the sleeping places for people of a lower class, and for the slaves.

In the sheltered valleys, the habitations are often merely made of plaited osier twigs, plastered with white or green clay, and covered with a straw thatch.

The poor share the shelter with the cattle, but the rich have sheds apart for them, and where the family is large, also separate huts for the women and for the slaves.

A recent traveller* gives a description of the interior of a house of the better class :—"My room is about twelve feet long, by eight broad—and is better furnished than that at Subith. It has a small unglassed window that can be closed with a shutter—the walls are hung with beautifully wrought mats ; the divan is covered with one of the choicest, and the bed last night laid upon it for my use was unexceptionable. It had a soft mattress bordered with velvet, velvet pillows, a quilted silk coverlet, and, better than all, clean white sheets. The only other furniture in my room is a bench placed across the lower end for young men, and persons of inferior rank ; but mats and cushions are ranged on the side opposite to that of the fireplace and window, for the seniors and 'persons of quality.'"

The same writer gives a description of a pretty out-of-door scene in a Circassian village :—"This hamlet is charmingly seated on a wooded knoll with others flanking it, and overlooking rich meadows intersected by the stream that gives its name to the district. High oak-clad hills close it in to the south . . . The

* Mr. Bell—in his "Journal of a Residence in Circassia"—a most interesting account, to which I have been much indebted.

'guest house' stands in a large green about which several noble oaks are scattered; in the centre is a small fieldpiece (the pride of our host's heart, mounted on an unwieldy carriage fit for a gun six times its calibre); divers parties of warriors are seated or standing about the green engaged in anxious, sometimes fierce debate—groups of cows and buffaloes are feeding from circular panniers fixed in the ground—horses saddled or unsaddled are tied to all the trees—turkeys and other poultry roam scaredly about their invaded domain—watch-dogs stalk sulkily around—while between the family houses that skirt the enclosure, females with their floating white veils glide gracefully on their household errands, and present a strong contrast to the Russian slaves lazily hewing wood and bearing water. A huge fence of split trees forms the enclosure, which is embosomed in woods, and through them appear the blue tops of the mountains to the south."

The Circassian women—although the influence of Islamism has been of course unfavorable to them—are nevertheless greatly superior in character and position to those of any people of whom we have hitherto spoken. They are, indeed, what we must call bought and sold, but seldom—perhaps never without their own consent; and if they are regarded as the property of their husbands and fathers, they nevertheless lead free, active, and useful lives, instead of being con-

demned, like most women of the East, to the dreary frivolity of the harem. As among civilized nations, their choice is considered as a very desirable if not necessary condition to marriage. Among tribes even who profess the Mahomedan religion the girls in Circassia are often sent to school to the Mollah, and taught to write and read Turkish religious books as well as the boys, and they share equally in many corporeal exercises. It is perhaps not quite fortunate for them that they are renowned for their beauty, and much in fashion in Constantinople; and they and their friends are therefore often tempted to speculate on a grand alliance with a rich Turk in preference to remaining to lead a life of greater purity and simplicity at home. Perhaps instances may, however, not be very uncommon even in civilized countries of young ladies and their parents being influenced by similar motives, and with less excuse. In the choice of a wife beauty is far from being in Circassia the only consideration; good housewifery, and other useful accomplishments, are equally regarded; and an instance is mentioned by Mr. Bell, of a young woman having a very high and widely extended reputation, who was even strikingly deficient in the beauty so generally characteristic of her race. She was renowned not only for her skill in embroidery, by which she maintained her family, but for her general talents, and her amiable, dignified deportment. She lived in the unrestrained

freedom of perfect innocence with the young men of the Brotherhood to which she belonged—yet he thought himself happy who could boast even of the smallest mark of her friendship ; and though she had many offers of marriage she declined them all. She is described as “a maiden of the sturdiest of figures, tawniest of complexions, and plainest—if not ugliest—features,” yet whose “unembarrassed and cheerful demeanor, and ready flowing conversation,” soon caused these disadvantages to be forgotten.

In the dress of the Circassian women we find none of the hideous and tasteless kind of decorations common among people in a half civilized state. They wear flowing robes of silk, cotton or cloth, with full trousers and caftans, or pelisses confined by a girdle with a silver clasp, and the bodice ornamented with silver lace—and frequently a small cap, to the front of which a diadem is affixed, and a long embroidered muslin veil flows down behind. The men wear cloth of dark rich colors, also ornamented with silver lace—but their weapons of attack and defence are their favorite decorations. The lower order wear a tunic and black mantle made of goat’s hair and sheep’s wool plaited together ; but every man is well armed with a poniard and hatchet in his belt, a light gun slung across his shoulders, and often a club large and heavy enough to fell an ox. Some tribes make much use of the bow and arrow, and carry shields of wood covered with buffalo’s hide,

and strengthened by bands of iron. When at home the Circassian hangs his glittering arms round the walls of his dwelling, as a decoration; but he seldom leaves his village without being completely armed. Visits of ceremony are usually made in a coat of mail, and helmets, cuirasses, and thigh pieces made of plates of steel laid over each other, and lined with woollen stuff. Chain armor of steel, or even silver rings, and enriched with gold ornaments, is worn by chieftains. It is made into a sort of shirt reaching from the neck to the knee, and has short sleeves for the defence of the upper part of the arm. The helmets are made so as to protect the neck and fasten under the chin. The horse of the Circassian is chosen not for beauty, but for fleetness and durability, and trained to endure hunger and fatigue, to swim, and practise all other accomplishments requisite for the companion of a guerilla warrior.

The military chieftains are elected to their office; and it is therefore their interest to gain the affection of the men under their command, and excite their admiration by acts of generosity and daring valor. "A Circassian knight," says a Genoese traveller of the fourteenth century, "is a great admirer of generosity, and cheerfully gives away everything he possesses, except his horse and his arms. In respect to his apparel, he is not only liberal but profuse; hence he often cuts a worse figure than his own vassals. Whenever he puts

on new clothes or a shirt of crimson silk, a vassal frequently begs them from him as a present ; and it would be the greatest disgrace if he denied or seemed unwilling to comply with the request. If therefore any one solicits the gift of the clothes upon his back, he immediately pulls them off; and changes them for those of the meanest applicant, be he ever so squalid. Thus the nobles and knights are frequently worse equipped than the common people, except in regard to boots, arms, and horses, which they never part with, and in which their chief pride consists." Whether this account be literally true or not it serves to express the speaker's opinion of the chivalrous character of the Circassians ; and as his countrymen had at that time many settlements on the Eastern shores of the Black Sea, it is probable that he had opportunities enough of becoming acquainted with it.

No Circassian receives pay for military service—it being considered disgraceful for a man to be paid for serving his country ; and every soldier provides himself on leaving home with bags of barley meal, millet or Indian corn, rice, sour milk, and mead. These he suspends round his saddle when on a march, together with game and such provisions as he picks up on his route, and which often have a very odd aspect when contrasted with his jewelled weapons and glittering armor. Wood to make fire is to be found everywhere—and in most places hares, deer, wild boars, as well as turkeys

and pheasants, are frequently met with. If possible the warrior also carries a ball of felt and mats, with which and a few branches of trees, he can construct in a few minutes a tent that will afford an excellent shelter from a storm, to the full violence of which his adversary the Russian soldier is often exposed, with no better protection than a flimsy jacket, linen trowsers, and a thread-bare coat.

The religion of the Circassians appears to be a singular mixture of Mahommedanism, and a slight infusion of ideas connected with Christianity, with the Pagan rites of their forefathers, and with notions and practices derived from the most ancient Israelites. Among many tribes the priestly office is performed by the patriarch of the family ; it is he who kindles the torch, and offers sacrifices at an altar erected in the open air in the shade of an ancient hallowed grove, to the gods of thunder, of fire, of water, and of wind, whom he worships ; but he believes at the same time in the superintending providence of one Supreme God, whom men may hope to please by the fulfilment of their duty, by exercising hospitality and beneficence, by paying reverence to old age, by fidelity and valor in the cause of their country. They make no image or representation of the gods, although they show reverence to the images preserved in the ancient Christian churches which still exist in some districts, as well as to the antique crosses to be seen in many parts of the

country, and which the Mahommedans have vainly endeavored to bring into disrepute. What is the signification of the cross—of what it is the symbol, they do not seem to have any notion ; but they honor it because their forefathers have done so. On one occasion, during Mr. Bell's stay in the country, even a Mussulman interfered to prevent the removal, which he regarded as desecration, of these ancient memorials. Many of the people wished to have them removed, but equally from a reverential motive, as they feared their being taken by the Russians. One of these crosses was on the summit of a hill, near some tombs—another was suspended by an iron chain to the branches of an ancient oak. Some of them are of stone, some of iron, but all of great age.

Besides the sacred groves and crosses, there are also holy mountains in Circassia, which Heathen, Christian, or Mahommedan, regards with equal reverence, and never passes without bowing down and making the sign of the cross ; and there are caves in the rocks revered as having been in former days the abodes of holy hermits. From the Mussulmans the Circassians have adopted an especial veneration for the moon, which in its crescent form gives the symbol of the faith of Islam, and they are, as has been observed, fond of holding their public meetings by moonlight.

One of the practices which the Circassians appear

to have derived from the ancient Hebrews, is that bearing the name of the "Feast of the Presentation," which appears like a commemoration of the sacrifice offered by Abraham. Every young lad, when he attains a certain age, is solemnly "presented to God," as it is called. An altar is prepared in a holy spot—usually on the greensward before one of the ancient crosses: in front is a row of tables covered with loaves of bread, and messes of a sort of paste, of honey, flour, and water, contributed by the country people, and, in the back ground, are blazing fires over which are suspended kettles for boiling the meat. For every boy to be presented, one animal—a sheep, or a goat, or a calf—must be sacrificed; and the ceremony begins with prayer to the highest God, after which the elder, officiating as priest, taking in one hand a bowl of mead, and in the other a cake of unleavened bread, turns towards the cross, and having implored a blessing on the food, gives it to his assistants, who give him more, which is to be blessed in a similar manner, and this is repeated several times—the assembly kneeling round the while with uncovered heads. The victims for sacrifice are then brought forward, a vessel of the consecrated liquor poured over the head of each, a little of the hair singed, and they are led away to be slain. This is the signal for the assembly to break up; and while the meat is being dressed, a variety of sports and athletic exercises, such as racing, leaping,

and shooting at a mark, are carried on, and, in conclusion, flowing bowls of mead pass round as in the banquets of the ancient Scandinavians.

From Christians the Circassians have borrowed a veneration for the Virgin Mary, and the practice of keeping holy the first day of the week ; and six times in the year, on the first Sundays of February, April, June, August, October, and December, public sacrifices take place in the sacred groves. The religion of the heathen Circassians is freer from gloomy or degrading superstition than that of any other pagan people, and places more reliance on the religion of the heart and the fulfilment of duty. The Mahommedans among them show less of the foolish prejudice against unbelievers, and a less timid anxiety about trifling external ceremonies, than others of their faith. Mr. Bell found among the Circassian warriors a Mollah, actively engaged in the business of the patriotic war, wearing a coat of mail, and exhorting his countrymen before all things to peace and union among themselves, and to forgetfulness of all causes of internal dissension.

Among the many evils brought upon Circassia by the war with the Russians, there has been one great good,—that it has produced more internal peace and national union. The warlike spirit of the people, which before kept them at constant hostility with each other, has been turned in a better direction,—that of resist-

ing a very cruel and unjustifiable attempt to seize on their country, and subject them to the same miserable and soul-killing despotism as the rest of the vast territories of the Emperor of Russia.

It is not that the mere loss of what is called national independence is always a great evil. In the case of a people who are not in a sufficiently advanced state to govern themselves well, the being subjected to the rule of a wiser nation, who might introduce just laws and civilized institutions, may be a great blessing. But when we see a government like that of Russia, urged by no motive but ambition and greediness, sending out vast armies of its serfs to overwhelm a comparatively free and happy country, to which it has no more claim than any rich man has to the cottage of a poor neighbor, we cannot but feel deeply interested in the contest, and fervently wish success to the heroic resistance of these brave mountaineers. Hitherto, considering the immense superiority of numbers, the Russians have made little way, but sad indeed has been the change in many districts where they have been victorious. Among a thousand instances we may mention one,—that of an aged patriarch, who, before the attack of the Russians, dwelt with his descendants in a beautiful and quiet homestead, in the Western Caucasus, but whose home was laid in ashes, and he and his family driven out to perish or subsist, as wan-

derers, on the charity of their countrymen, too many of whom had been rendered equally destitute.

"Poor old Mahmoud," says an Englishman,* who had partaken of his hospitality, "how much I admired thy peaceful retreat—the beautiful rivulet that bubbled past the door—the majestic linden planted with thy own hands—the sunny slopes of the majestic hills covered with flocks and herds—the manly youths and lovely daughters of thy house—the little rosy cherubs that called thee great-grandfather; but thy powerful neighbor came down like a ravenous wolf, and in one short winter thou wast left without a home, a refugee and a wanderer, amid the fastnesses of thy native hills. No longer will thy humble cot be open for the reception of the weary traveller—no longer will thy osier palace echo to the song of revelry, the shout of triumph; the knout and the lash will succeed thy patriarchal reproof, and, in a little time, thy noble tribe, now become the slaves of a despot, will degenerate from the bravest of the brave to the veriest cowards, 'the hewers of wood and drawers of water to the conqueror.'"

May Heaven forbid that such should be the fate of the whole of this fine race—for assuredly if there is or can be such a thing as a just and necessary war, the heroic struggle in which the Circassians are now, and

* Mr. Spencer, in his "Travels in the Western Caucasus and the Adjoining Countries."

have for many years been engaged, may be truly so regarded. Gladly would we put faith in the assurance of the poet, that

‘Freedom’s battle once begun,
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,
Though baffled oft, is ever won.’

Should this be—should the Circassians succeed in making good their cause, and history affords us more than one illustrious example of success against equally fearful odds, good may arise out of evil, and the storm, which looked so threatening, prove to be the harbinger for them of a new and brighter era of a truer civilisation and happiness, than in their former rude and divided state they could have ever known.

THE END.

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